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AS THE HART PANTETH



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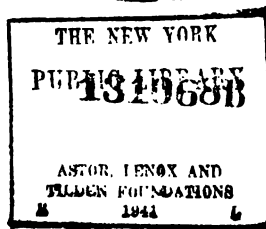
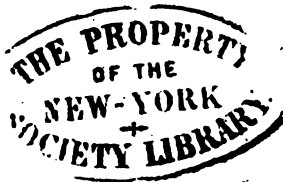
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TO
A MEMORY.

[3]

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE CHILD	7
THE GIRL	104
THE WOMAN	185



AS THE HART PANTETH.

THE CHILD.

CHAPTER I.

HE sat just outside the lofty doorway, that opened between the bare hall and front verandah. The great white columns held a wild clematis vine, the leaves of which almost concealed the bricks where the plaster had fallen off. Presently a child came out with a violin in her hand. She went up to him, and laying her full cheek against his shrunken one, caressed him. Her

[7]

blue eyes that went black in an instant, from the pupils' swift dilation, had the direct gaze of one knowing nothing of the world and never fearing to be misunderstood. She was slim yet strong; her waving hair that fell softly about her face was the color of sunburnt cornsilk, her skin ovalling from it, smooth and white, like a bursting magnolia bud.

"Grandpa, I can play 'The Mocking Bird' for you now."

"Play it, God's child; play it," he said.

As she leaned against the column and began playing, his face, old and worn with many griefs, seemed, for a moment, rejuvenated by the spirit of his lost youth. His heart stirred strangely within him, and he was minded of another slim, little girl, who came down to the gate to meet him when the day was done in the long ago. She had the same glorious hair, and tender, fearless eyes and love for him. But that was more than forty years gone by and she was dead.

As the strains became fuller and sweeter, a

bird began twittering, trilling among the leaves, imitating the sounds it heard.

"Listen. Do you hear that, Esther?" whispering, as he searched for a sight of the singer. "There it is. It's a mocking bird," he said, pointing to the young thing, as the fluting feathers on its throat stood out like the pipes of an organ. Its song, accompanying the tune, never ceased until the violin was tossed upon the bench and the child was in the old man's arms.

"That was beautiful, beautiful!" His eyes were filled with tears of enthusiasm that fell upon her hair.

"Your mother used to play that, when she was young." He spoke with the weight of profound emotion, that glowed in his eyes, and quivered on his lips.

"And did the bird sing with her?" a softer look coming upon the childish face.

"I don't remember that it did, though she was always a friend to the birds that built their nests about us. She kept the boys from breaking them

up or trapping them. Every spring they sang here in the trees. They seemed to know that she was looking after them. That must have been what she was born for. She was always watching over something or somebody." He swallowed hard. "I can see her now, bending over her work, late at night, stitching away, with her fingers on those gray clothes for the boys in the army—your Uncle Billy and your father."

"Was she little, then?" Esther inquired, while with one hand she clasped his wrist, and with the other stroked his brow.

"No. When the war broke out, she was just about to be married to your father, who had been appointed Captain under General Lee. She made a coat for him and quilted money in the collar. She had a way of doing things that nobody would have thought of. You remind me of her." He folded his hands across his stick and was silent for a moment. "There is much about her life that I want you to know, and bear in mind, now that you are getting old enough to understand.

She had great hopes for you, for your music. I've been thinking how proud she would be if she could know that you had got along well enough to be invited to play at the University—on commencement night at that. I ask nothing higher for you than that you make such a woman as your mother."

They did not see the old negro, ragged to the skin, coming around the corner of the house, carrying his discolored straw hat in one hand and mopping his face on a faded cotton handkerchief.

CHAPTER II.

"G'MORNIN', Marse Hardin."

"Howdy, Sandy. Where did you come from? I thought you'd gone clear out of the country, for good."

"Nor sir, nor sir. You jes' let a nigger git a taste of dis here spring water, and he's charmed, conjured, he kyant stay away if he do go. But I come back, dis time, to see my young marster —Marse Davy Pool."

"How is he to-day?"

"He daid. Dat's what I was sent to tell you. Dey guinter bury him up at de old place."

"I am sorry to hear of his death, Sandy. He was the best one of the boys."

"Dat's so, sir; 'tain't nobody guine to miss him

like his mammy do. She's told me to ax you for your hoss and buggy. She's afeared of the boys' hosses, dey keep such wild uns. Marse Davy sold his'n, dat was the onliest one she would ride behind. She said she wanted Marse Hardin Campbell's. It was so trusty and gentlelike."

"I was going to use it after dinner." Mr. Campbell hesitated.

"Send it on, grandpa. Send it on." Esther saw the inquiring look her grandfather turned upon her. "Something will turn up."

"Suppose it shouldn't; would you be disappointed?" he asked.

"I never count on being disappointed," she responded, quickly.

"Ain't she some kin to Miss Mary Campbell?" The negro's face lighted as he asked the question.

"That's her daughter, Miss Esther Powel."

"It 'peared to me like I seed de favor in her face. Ev'ybody loved your mammy, honey.

'Twarn' nobody that didn't," he said, turning to look again at Esther.

"The horse is in the pasture." Mr. Campbell turned to the child. "Can't you run and show him where the bridle is?" Bareheaded, she bounded down the steps, and motioned to the old negro to follow. She took the bridle and swung it over his arm. "Mind the foot log, Uncle Sandy, the hand rail has been washed away. The pasture is over the creek. There is Selam now, under the sweet gum tree." She pointed. "You will find the harness in the carriage house here."

She watched him go over the slope to the creek, then stood gazing about her in childish contemplation. It was nearly noon. The shadow straightening in the doorway indicated it.

Mr. Campbell looked and saw her. His heart warmed toward her comeliness; moreover she was sweet of nature and had a ready smile even for those who had not been kind to her. Suddenly she disappeared in the direction of the carriage

house. She feared that her pony could not pull the heavy vehicle that alone was left to take her to the University. It taxed her strength to draw the heavy bar from across the carriage house door. She sprang backward, as she dropped it upon the ground; then went in to examine the carriage that had not been used since she was a baby, almost fifteen years before. The clumsy conveyance had small iron steps that let down—steps that her mother's child feet had pressed in climbing to the seat. The wheels were so heavy and cumbersome that she shook her head doubtfully. The green satin lining was in shreds; the worn leather seats covered with tufts of hair, while here and there a dead leaf or twig was tangled in its coarse mesh. It had required a pair to draw it in those old days. She had forgotten that. The tongue was held up in its position above by a girder in the loft. Esther gave it a strong, hard pull; the tongue fell forward, and as she skipped out of its path the lumbering old carriage went rolling down the incline, and

clouds of dust, as though indignant at being disturbed, sullenly rose and fell about her.

Old and dilapidated harness that hung down from the walls swayed slowly in the general commotion. Esther wiped the dust from her eyes and drew a long breath, looking defiantly at the result. She looked down. There, at her feet, lay a bird, fluttering beside its fallen nest. Her face lost its look of defiance.

"You poor, little thing," bending down and cuddling it to the softness of her cheek. "Don't die, please, don't die!" she said, in dismay. "It will break my heart if I have killed you." With tears streaming down her face she ran swiftly to the house.

"Grandpa, do something for it," laying it in his hand. "Can you save it? It's a mocking bird, too. I shook it out of the carriage."

"They have nested there for years," he said as he drew the wings gently through his fingers. "They are not broken," he assured her.

"Are you sure it will live?" She was looking at him with frightened eyes.

"Live? Yes; and have a nest and young ones of its own next year. It is only stunned. Leave it in the parlor where it will be safe from the cats and it will be all right soon."

A faint rumbling noise broke in upon their voices. They looked up to listen. It was like the sound of a wagon rolling. "Put it away, quick, and run to the creek to show them how to cross the ford." They had kept close watch over the passers since the winter hauling had cut deep holes in the bed of the stream. It was a treacherous crossing. Closing the door upon her charge, Esther ran through the garden, the nearest way. She sped with the lithe agility of a young fawn, and before the newcomer was fairly into the stream she was there giving directions. The mountain stream ran fleet between its low banks, winding in haste through the valley. Tall sycamores, sentinels in silver armor, stood beside it on either hand.

CHAPTER III.

MR. CAMPBELL stood watching. Very soon the front gate opened and a boy came in, driving two white mules, with red tassels on their bridle bits. Amazement filled his eyes when he saw that it was a wagon load of coffins, and on the topmost one Esther sat smiling. As they drove up near the door, he went out to help her down.

"Didn't I tell you something would turn up, grandpa; this wagon is going right by the University this evening." She threw her arms about his neck; her laugh rang out in pure triumph. "Hitch your team, young man; a boy will come to take it out and feed it." When they saw Esther again she was ready for her jaunt. Her violin was in its case; her fresh white organdie

folded with as much care as she gave to anything—duty and care were unknown to her. Her visit to the University by such a conveyance would be the extreme limit of indulgence, yet she had no thought of being denied.

"I am ready," she announced at table. Mr. Campbell burst into a laugh, half of annoyance, yet touched with the ring of true amusement.

"I really believe you would go."

"I'd go on foot if necessary to keep my promise," she answered quickly.

"How could the college folks know that Mr. David Pool had to be buried to-day when they printed my name on the programme?"

Watching her eyes, he caught their softness, their innocence, and knew that her eagerness was sincere.

"Let her go, Mr. Campbell, I'll take good care of her." The boy was a Rudd. Although he held a lowly position, he was not counted of the common people. Mr. Campbell had the old Virginia pride of race in him.

"I know you would."

Esther looked steadily into his gray eyes and saw a relenting twinkle.

"Am I going?" Turning to her with a quiet smile: "Yes, you may go.' He could not see her disappointed when her heart was so determined. With a little cry of joy she brought her hands together. "I wish you could come along, grandpa. It will be such fun, and I wanted you to hear me to-night." When the wagon came around Esther was helped up with her case and bundle. Her violin she held tenderly across her arm. Mr. Campbell went with them to close the gate.

"Good-bye; you will be in for me to-morrow." Leaning down, she embraced his head. "Be sweet, God's child," he said, as they drove off. Esther kissed her hand to him, as he stood by the roadside looking after them. The cook, at the kitchen door, waved her dish rag for a frantic moment. The whirl of dust from the wheels soon clouded the view. The old man turned,

and went slowly back to the house with a misty smile over his features.

A quaint, pathetic figure that, of Hardin Campbell, with his age, his poverty and the care of this child. Here had once been planter life in its carelessness and lavishness. It had been the home of friend and neighbor and the hospitable shelter of the transient guest. All the grand folk that came that way made this place headquarters in the days when Mr. Campbell was reckoned rich. But what he had lost in wealth he had more than gained in pride, and the child was brimming over with it. Generous, impetuous, enthusiastic, as she was, this wild young creature of nature, unhindered, venturesome and full of whims, would, he hoped, find pride her safeguard. He did not believe in curbing her. He guided, but did not limit her and tried to keep from her all warping influences. This was the way her mother had begun with her and he was only continuing her way for a while—it could not be very long before he would have to resign

his charge. To whom—he did not know and could not bear to dwell upon the thought.

About the whole place there was evidence of departed glory. In the great white buildings which rose from the labyrinth of shrubbery like grim ghosts of the past; in the rows of cabins, formerly the dwellings of a horde of happy-hearted negroes, everywhere was evidence of the bygone prodigal days. The house, of colonial style, with its series of tall columns standing about the broad collonade, was partially screened by the live oaks and was set some distance back from the big road. These encircling columns were built of brick, with a coating of plaster, once as white as the teeth of Uncle Simon, the plantation white-washer, who in former days would put an immaculate dress on them regularly once a month by means of an elevated step-ladder, but now Uncle Simon's labors were done. The neglected columns were crumbling with age and sadly splotched with the red of exposed masonry. At one side of the verandah there

spread the delicate green of the star-jasmine, with its miniature constellations flecking the background. Through the vista, leading to the house, from the big gate in front, flashed the crimson of a flowering-pear in full blossom. The blinds of the house that had once been green, were now hanging from their hinges, weather-stained, giving full view of a number of broken window panes, in one of which, on the second story, was perched a wren, whose energetic chattering over her nest hardby was the most decided indication of active life.

In the rear of the buildings stretched the cabins. To the right of them were the stables and the carriage house, with its weather vane of a flying steed on the top, but for years the most vigorous gales had failed to spur this steed to action and its tail, at one time proudly aflaut to the breeze, had yielded to time and rust, and, like that of Tam o' Shanter's mare, knew naught of direction. There was the dreary stillness of desolation over all things. But still a hospitable

glow was in the summer sunshine and shore as well in the eyes of the old master.

* * * * *

Esther took off her hat when she got into the depths of the woods and drew out her violin. "I will amuse the boy," she thought, "if I play to him," for she had tired of talking against the rumbling of the wagon and its load. In his way, he appreciated her motive, for now and again he called back to her, awkwardly commending her, and urging her to continue. Near the spring they saw the negro washerwomen, with sleeves rolled to their shining shoulders, bending over their tubs; faded, limp skirts, bloused through apron belts, and dangled about their bare legs. A big wash kettle heaped with white linen stood to one side. Around it a fire was burning low for want of fuel.

"O—o—h! Yo' Tagger, Tag-g-e-r; you'd better come on here, ef you know what's good for you," called one of the women with a long, re-

sounding echo that drowned the answer of the small voice that said he was on his way. A troop of little niggers came to the roadside pulling a wagon load of brush and bark gathered through the woods. They looked back and spied Esther on the coffins. With a wild yell the children, load and all, tumbled over the embankment, rolling over each other in the dust, screaming, "Mammy! mammy!" at the top of their voices, scrambling to their feet and running with might and main down the road. As Esther drew up to the wash-place, the little fellows were clinging frantically to the knees of their mothers.

"It's a little ha'nt blowin' Gabel's trumpet. Don't let it ketch me! don't let it ketch me!"

"In de name ob de Lawd!" said one of the women, seeing what had caused the fright; "ain't you all got de sense you was born wid? Don't you know Miss Esther Powel, Marse Hardin's granddaughter?" The eyes of the pickaninnies were blinded by the wads of wet aprons they had covered them with, and the sound of the wheels

filled them with terror. "Dry up!" The big dripping hand pounded on their heads. "Scuse 'em, Miss Esther, you'd think dese youngun's been fotch up wid wild injun's."

"Tagger," Esther called the boy, whose name, Montague, she had been responsible for. "Don't you know me? I played for you to dance a jig for the young men who used to visit Will Curtis before he died. You haven't forgotten that, have you?" Hearing her familiar voice, he slowly peeped out with scared eyes.

"You little monkey. Dip me some water out of the spring." She saw a long, yellow gourd hanging from a striped bough above their heads. "I want a drink." He sprang up and snatched the gourd, and before she could say more, he was holding it up to her, standing on his tiptoes, grinning, as the tears ran down and stained his dusty face.

"I am going to play at the University to-night," she said, hanging back the gourd.

"You don' say? One of dem 'Varsity gem-

men's coming out to see Marse Will's folks next week." Tagger's mother lived with the Curtises, whose home was just beyond the spring. "I'll be bound, you beat 'em all dar if you does play to-night," she said when she saw they were leaving.

Bareheaded, Esther rode on, as long as the shade was over them, tying on her hat only when they got to the sunny way of the road. A man plowing in a cornfield, looked up as he stopped at the turn of the row. He gazed intently, rapping the line mechanically about his wrist.

"What is her grandpa thinking of?" seeing it was Esther, whom he knew. "But she'd a gone in spite of hell and high water." With this aloud to himself, he drew his shirt sleeve across the sweat on his brow and trudged back down the row, relieved.

After two hours or more, through the heat, Esther was glad when at last she could see the end of her journey. The sunlight lay radiant upon the stretch of country famed for this honored

institution of learning. Just before her, upon an eminence, spread the University buildings, the tall spires marking their profile on the sky. The sun's rays shot up behind them its last warm flashes. Its heat had already dampened Esther's hair, deepening the red tint of its waves against her temples. The campus was alive with students coming and going in every direction. The tenor of the glee club, in his striped sweater of the college colors, humming a popular air, walked leisurely across to where one fellow was sprawled on the ground, gazing at the wagon with an amused curiosity on his handsome face.

"By Jupiter! that's a pretty child." The tenor turned to look, as his friend spoke.

"Well, if that isn't a caper! Wonder where she is bound?" Just then a pert freshman, standing in a group, gave a college yell. Then there was a chorus of rapturous cheers, in which most of them joined. Before the noise had subsided, the man on the grass had leaped to his feet, full of indignation, and dashed off toward the freshman.

"Silence! you fellows! Have you forgotten yourselves?" A few hisses were mingled with the applause that greeted him, but the freshman was quick to say at his elbow:

"I didn't mean it for her."

"How could she know that?" He walked away saying: "I'll wager there is something out of the ordinary in that girl."

He was of the fiber that commanded the respect of men at a glance.

"Andrews always turns up at the right time, you may count on that," said one of the students as he watched him sauntering in the direction of the wagon, his eyes following the child. She was perched like a white winged bird of good omen on a funeral pyre. Only a nature adventurous to audacity would do such a thing as that. But he loved daring personalities, strong motives and even a misadventure, if it were a brave one.

CHAPTER IV.

GLENN ANDREWS was, by every gift of nature, a man. His sensitive, expressive face, his brown eyes glowing with a light that seemed to come from within, his clear and resolute bearing, all gave evidence of his sterling qualities. All through his college years he was known among his fellows as a dreamer. His was one of those aloof—almost morbidly solitary natures, to whom contact with the world would seem jarring and out of key. The boys had nicknamed him "Solitaire." He had a womanly delicacy in morals, his sense of honor was as clean and bright as a soldier's sword.

Those who knew him well loved him, and all

of his school fellows sought for his notice, the more, perhaps, because he gave it rarely.

Whenever he played with them, it was as one who unconsciously granted a favor. He was looked upon as a man who would be a sharer in the talents of his race. This was his ambition. He had strong literary tastes and was a serious worker.

Often he champed at the bit through the slow routine of college life—the genius within him thirsting for action like a spirited horse, just in sound of the chase.

After the exercises that night, the pretty faces and scent of roses filled the chapel with light and fragrance. Everything was in warm confusion, congratulations blended with tender farewells and honest promises that youth was sure to break.

Glenn Andrews, with the dignity that went well with his cap and gown, was making his way out. The tenor touched him on the shoulder.

"What did you think of that violin solo?"

"Fine, my boy, fine! She played just before my turn, and she must have been my inspiration, for I was surprised to get the medal."

"I'm jolly glad you got it anyhow."

"Did you find out who she was?"

"Esther Powel. Her grandfather is a friend of Professor Stark. He did it to give her a chance."

"Well she used it for all it was worth," said Andrews.

CHAPTER V.

ESTHER was standing by the rim of a clear pool in the woods, gazing down into the water. Her big hat was weighted with cockle blooms that she had gathered in coming through the wheat. In this natural mirror she could see that a stem here was too long, another there was turned the wrong way to look well. With both hands to her head she was intent upon regulating the effect to please her eye. Turning her head first to one side, then another, she smiled at herself, impulsive, always in motion, quick as a wren. The water was so clear that one could see the last year's leaves lying at its depths, It was deep and sloped toward the center. Inverted at would look like a mound where children are told

that Indians are buried, when the one can think of no other excuse for its grave-like appearance. This pool went by the name of "Indian Well." Esther had no thought but that she was alone, until she saw an image, a serious young face, reflected there, with soft, brown beard and hair, and deep eyes that wore a languid, meditating look. He stooped and dipped his curved hand into the surface and was raising it to his lips. Suddenly, instinctively, she bounded to his side, dashing the water from his hands before he could drink.

"Don't you know there is fever in it?"

For a moment he looked at her in wonder.

"The fever," he repeated, "what do you mean?"

"The germs of typhoid—I thought everybody knew that."

"But you see I am not everybody," he answered, laughing.

She looked at every feature of his face. "But didn't you feel like it the other night?"

This surprised him so that he had not made an answer when she went on: "Everybody who has died of typhoid fever around here drank water out of 'Indian Well.' This is where they got the germ."

"I was never here before. You are very good to warn me." He looked at her and she seemed so sweet and beautiful as she stood there, between him and danger. Whether real or imagined, her motive was the same.

"Is your home near by?"

"I live with my grandpa in the white house on the road as you came up."

"I didn't come by the road; I came through by the wood-path from the Curtises. I'm spending the summer there. What a pity this lovely spot is poisoned, I am sorry; I might see you here again but for that. It makes a pretty tryst," he said.

"Sorry? Why? You don't know me."

This pleased him. He had found a refreshing

creature. At the outset he had thrilled at the prospect.

"Don't I? You played once where I had the pleasure of hearing you. Your name is Esther—Esther Powel."

"Yes, and I have seen your face before I saw it in the water. They called you 'Glenn Andrews' when they gave you the medal."

She slowly looked him over from head to foot, and smiled as if in a trance of joy. It was all so wonderful, so strange—this hero's coming.

"But I am still ahead. You will never see me win laurels again, perhaps, and I expect to hear you play many times."

"Don't be sure. It's no use for me to play. People don't seem to care whether they hear it or not. I play for myself, because the sounds from my violin seem to express what I feel."

"But suppose I care?"

"Then I will play for you sometime, if we should meet again."

"When could I get in your way?"

"Most any time."

"Will you be home all summer?"

"Yes, and winter, too." She laughed at his question.

"Let us sit down and rest a while together. I want to talk over the pleasure that is in store for me."

Little did he think as she agreed, and they sat down on an old log, how much in later life and amidst different scenes, he was to lament that circumstance. "I have always loved the country. It is so true, so beautiful; I love it from the bottom of my heart."

He lifted his face, drawing a deep breath; the air was clean and sweet with the scent of growing things.

"Everything is beautiful that's natural," she said, touching the beflowered hat. I never even wear 'bought' flowers, because they are only make-believes. I hate anything that is not sure-enough."

"It's a pretty idea. I wondered where you found this."

"Just made it."

She seemed to have grasped a good deal for her years.

"I see you have learned a way of your own in your travels."

"Travels! I've never been out of this valley, but I have grandpa and my mother and my dreams."

"Your mother. I heard that your mother was dead," he said, quietly.

"She isn't as long as I am living," was her answer.

Glenn Andrews looked at her. There was wisdom in the sentiment she expressed. All the childishness had passed out of her face.

He hesitated, astonished. "I believe that, in a sense," he said. "It is my theory of fulfillment. What could spur us to higher destinies than the belief that we were carrying out the hopes, the

aims of someone we loved—perpetuating their life through our own!”

“She wanted me to be a musician,” Esther began with a sudden dimness in her eyes. “She was one until she had rheumatism in her arms. I’ve strength and health to build on, something she lacked. My mother was an invalid all her life after I was born.”

“Health is the most priceless gift in this world.”

For a time he forgot it was near the dinner hour. He was caught by the witchery of the girl and the place.

He had expected to find nothing here but solitude and shade. The adventure had been a delightful surprise to him.

As they got up from the log: “I shall expect you to keep your promise about the music. Are you going my way?”

“No; mine is the opposite direction. I will play for you any time because you want to hear me. Good-bye.”

Glenn Andrews looked after her, as she went her way. Here was a study—a promise. All his life he had loved growth. Anything in the course of development delighted and inspired him. He struck off up the path that wound out of the woods into the field.

The scent of high summer was in the gold of the wheat. Running his hands lightly over the bearded sheaves he whistled an air that was to recall neither the genius that wrote it nor the hopes of his own work, but the face of Esther Powel and the friendship thus begun, of which he would never think lightly afterward.

CHAPTER VI.

THE Curtis home had an ample territory over which extended eight large rooms and as many half stories with dormer windows. The big mock oranges locked antlers across the path that led from the gate to the little square porch where the wood bees droned in and out of the nests they had bored in the wooden posts.

Mr. Curtis was a jovial man, round of face, short of stature, and given to hospitality. He had been all his days faithful to that laborious outdoor occupation—farming. In his old age the prosperous impression that everything made proved that he had filled his place to some account.

Glenn Andrews, who had been his son's com-

rade in life, was an honored guest. His vacation, usually spent in travel, had been claimed by the lonely parents this time. He was promised all manner of recreations and indulgences. They hoped to send him back as hardy as an Indian, his white face and hands bronzed as the leaves in their turning. Broad hours and solitude. How welcome they were to him! His place was sacred in this house, and no one was allowed to disturb or criticise him. He had set apart a few hours each day for work. He could not devote all his vacation to rest and pleasure. It was not his nature. A memory of his strange, lonely boyhood came to him with vivid distinctness, and the absolute despair, he suffered at the possibility of never being able to achieve greatness in the world. He wanted to see good results in his life. The whole intensity of his spirit was bent on that one purpose. The world he would know, and the men that live in it. His mind was full of daring conceptions and ideals.

A wild grace permeated his personality, the

strong and delightful charm which was to make him a conqueror.

That morning Glenn ate breakfast with the family by lamplight. He went back to his window afterwards and watched the sun rise. At this season of the year the beauty of Virginia was at its height. He delighted from the first in the splendid scenery and moody weather.

A haze of purple mist was lifting slowly from the mountains between whose heart the valleys lay. The view was fresh with the lusty color of midsummer. Exquisite perfumes, breath of young corn and cut clover, came to him and grew sharper and sweeter as the dawn opened wide. In nature he could see the warm heart of life, tender, strong and true. In the distance stretched the wheat fields studded over with yellow shocks, waiting for harvest-time. Later, as Glenn Andrews passed out on his way to the woods, he saw the lengthening of the table, the unusual hurry among the servants, which was a sign that he was to have dinner that day in a harvest home.

Wheat threshing time was on. This lover of the sun, of long, wandering strolls, took the way he had not been. It did not concern him much which way he took to solitude. Wherever they met they made friends—he and solitude. They were so much alike. Their sympathies were so much akin. Both were full of deep nature, dignity and intense self-possession; they could not but find comforting good-fellowship. With solitude he could almost hear the voice of God, hear it speaking, between him and his hopes. Returning, he stopped at “Indian Well.” A long time he sat there, face to face with his own heart and brain. He made notes at times in a small book, which he kept always with him. The class poet and editor of the college magazine had a right to drop into rhyme whenever he felt like it, even though the indulgence might never be known to the world. Glenn Andrews took out his second cigar, drew a whiff of its scent and put it back in his pocket. In his self-denial there was the compensation of looking forward. He smoked it that after-

noon over his work. The sun was striking aslant and was not far from setting. Here was a broad hint to hurry if he cared to see them harvesting. The engine sent its shrill whistling call for "wheat" as he leaned over the fence. Dressed in a hunting suit of brown tweed with tan boots laced from the ankle to the knee, his broad hat pulled forward to shade his eyes, Glenn Andrews attracted notice. The field was alive with toilers moving easily, swiftly, leaning in a hundred graceful inclinations; some were loading their wagons, lifting and loosening their shocks with a thrust of their pitch-forks, others unloading them beside the thresher, clipping the twine that bound the bundles and making a moving bridge of beaten gold as they fed it. The heated engineer, with his oil-can, stood at the head of the monstrous steam horse that had never lost its mysterious power to charm the negro.

Tagger often stopped to stare and wonder. The machinery belt, smooth and glittering like a broad satin ribbon, industriously turning on

great wheels, made him dance, barefooted over the stubble, to the music of its motion. Little imps, such as he, counted this day of the year a holiday high above all others they had ever known.

The mule that was driven with a long lasso under the straw as it fell had a half-dozen or more children to pull every time it went to the stack. In spite of the dust and the chaff that covered their heads and half stifled them, they gave a wild dart and leaped upon the heap as it was hauled away. Sometimes the wind took a whirl and scattered the straw, niggers and all broadcast along the field. Glenn Andrews' heart beat lightly, the air thrilled with sounds, the music of the harvesters and the hum of the thresher. There is nothing like life under the open heaven, he knew. Glenn was a gypsy by nature.

"How is it turning out?" he asked, coming up to Mr. Curtis, who was counting the loaded wagons that were filled with sacks of wheat, starting off to be stored.

"Very good; the yield is something like sixteen bushels to the acre. I'll have about eighteen hundred altogether." Glenn Andrews looked up and saw a figure coming across the stubble—one that stood out in delicate relief, slimmer, shapelier than the rest. She was all in white; Mr. Curtis saw her, too.

"Here comes the fly-up-the-creek," he said. "She looks like a hearse horse with all those elder blooms on her head." His speech had no touch of spitefulness.

"I like her way; she is as wild and lawless as the wind, and as free." Glenn Andrews never thought or spoke of Esther without defense.

"Yes, and as sprightly as they make 'em," Mr. Curtis began. "She never went to school a day in her life. Her mother taught her, and her grandpa reads to her. But play the fiddle—she can play it to beat the band. She just took it up first. She could catch any tune. A teacher came along about two years ago, who knew a little about the fiddle. Mr.

Campbell is very poor now. He let the lady board with him to give Esther lessons while she was teaching in the district. She would not practice, they say, but you never saw anybody learn like she did without it."

"What a pity she hasn't a chance to keep on."

"Yes, but she never will. The old man is failing; I don't know what's to become of her when he's gone. He worries over not being able to give her a musical education. You'd never think it, he is so quiet about it."

"Has she no near relatives who would take her and help her to get a start?"

"Only one, a nephew of the old man, but he married a plain, common woman. His marriage was a shock to the family. If his was made in heaven, as some folks believe in, I say the Lord had a grudge against him. He started out with fine prospects, but he's had a lot of trouble. It looks like some folks can't have anything but trouble and children. He has a family of six. He ain't more than thirty.

Glenn took a deep breath.

"With such a weight as that it is no wonder he is sore. I wish the child did have some way to escape such a future. With a talent like hers she could rise above the minor cares. The world already has enough ill-paid drudges."

With this he left Mr. Curtis to meet Esther.

"Can you show us anything prettier than this in your cities?" she asked. Looking about her she thought it made the hardest, happiest scene in the world.

"No, I could only show you something different—new; to the average mind it is unaccustomedness that charms. I like this because it is new." The world he had known seemed immeasurably far off to them as they stood together there. Everything about her touched him. Her true, simple nature, her strong, pure devotion to her own ideals.

"You haven't played for me yet."

As he heard the engine blowing off the steam,

he knew they were rounding up; its work was done.

"No, and you didn't want to hear me as much as you made out; you forgot," she said.

"I would like to hear you this minute."

"Then come with me home."

"But look at me: my face—my hands—these boots."

Esther looked at him quickly. "You are vain." Slipping her hand in his, she gently pulled him a little way. "Oh, come on, what do you suppose I care about dust. We have soap and water."

He let her have her way, and allowed himself to be led.

The sun hung low in the sky as they started off, and was just dropping behind the mountains when they reached the house. Faint zones of pink and pearl flushed up, and everything was quickened—glorified by the softening light.

"I've got a picture in my scrap book that looks like you." Esther stared Glenn Andrews full in the face as she spoke. "It is a picture of Christ."

CHAPTER VII.

"I LIKE you in those high boots." Esther put her foot on the tip of one of them as she spoke.

"It was not so much vanity, as respect for your grandfather, that made me want to appear at my best when I met him."

"You see, he didn't notice them. Why should you care, anyhow, if I liked them."

There was a certain charm in her contempt for risks and consequences. A waiter was brought out clinking with glasses.

"This will not only prove your welcome, Mr. Andrews, but aid your digestion as well," Mr. Campbell said, as he came out of the hall to join them.

Andrews filled his glass that yielded frag-

rance and soft fire. He touched it to his lips. "This is excellent. Is it some of your own make?"

"The grapes came from my vineyard."

"I helped to make it—I strained it," Esther interrupted, "but I never tasted any in my life." Mr. Campbell laid his hand on her head.

"This is to you—to your art." Glenn Andrews motioned to her, lifted his glass and sipped the wine, slowly realizing it was beautiful to every sense. Esther stole into the parlor, and was playing her violin before they knew it. They followed her in. It was an old-time parlor with black, carved furniture, a slender legged center table, polished as smooth as a mirror, holding a china vase of curious design, in which leaned one long stemmed rose, as red as the wine that had made their hearts large and soft. The walls were almost hidden by family portraits that reached from the ceiling to the floor, set in deep tarnished gilt frames. The carpet had a shred of tracery suggesting a design—it might have been

only a shadow of gorgeous wreaths that had been worn away by dear feet that had long gone—the whole faint impression still hallowed by their tread.

Esther loved her violin irregularly. This was a time when she really needed it. They went in very quietly, hoping not to interrupt her. The soft, tremulous tones that she had not meant to give, showed that she was excited, unnerved. Just as Glenn was about to utter an apology for the confusion, his face became serious and silent. He was peculiarly sensitive to the influence of the violin. He was conscious of a dreamy exaltation, and the awakening of a new enthusiasm. The music had burst into a wild, passionate tenderness, as though she was daringly investing all her dreams with life-throbbing human life—the tone fairly voicing the longing of her soul.

It was infinitely touching, infinitely tender. A quick flush went up to his forehead and died out again, as the music trembled into stillness, and she lowered the violin, exhausted.

"You must be very proud of her," Glenn turned to the old man, "I think she has a future."

"She ought to have a chance for it," said Mr. Campbell. A glance from Esther's flushed face to the suddenly compressed lips of her grandfather made Glenn understand that that was as near to complaint as he ever came. He might have been impatient in his days of strength, but on the coming of adversity this proud man had learned to wait in silence. He seldom breathed a syllable of the sorrow he bore on account of his hands being tied.

"Practice is half the battle; you ought to spend hours at it every day," Glenn said to Esther as she tossed her head.

"I don't ever expect to study under anyone again. What's the use going half way when I know I can never go the other half?"

"But you will if you only have belief in yourself."

Mr. Campbell was delighted as he listened.

Here was someone interested in his little girl. He trusted a kindliness so genuine, an interest so evidently sincere.

A child's soul is easily impressed, responsive to the first panorama that passes before it. Mr. Campbell hoped Glenn Andrews would come again.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE next few weeks for Esther were transitions between content and longing. The trees of the woodland, that had been her playfellow, now had a rival. Of Glenn Andrews she had made a hero, a king. She regarded him as a being to inspire wonder and mystery.

His simplest word or gesture spoke directly to the heart.

They took sweet wood rambles together. He had already begun to realize that all solitary pleasures were selfish.

He rather looked forward to their meetings, although he did not let her think they meant much to him.

"When do you want to see me again?" was

usually his parting question. If she said "tomorrow," he could not come until the next day, or later. To her it seemed that he took a pride in finding out when she most wanted to see him—only to stay away at that particular time. He held himself aloof—gave her room to expand. Hers was a nature artistic to a painful degree—a nature nobly expansive.

But within the limit of the country, amid entirely commonplace people, her power of artistic perception had been of little value—rather a burden than a delight.

One day, after she had urged Glenn Andrews to go with her to where they would have a pretty view of a mountain waterfall, he had refused, and she had gone alone. It was a long stroll, but she was thirsting to see it. She resented his refusal, and so had gone alone. Glenn watched her out of sight, then went back to his writing. He was doing some of his strongest and most vigorous work.

Esther reached the mountain side, and stood a

little way back to keep the spray from wetting her dress. The breath of it was refreshing. She took a pride in the mighty roar of the falls.

Its voice sounded so strong, so real. Its commanding majesty held her. She repeated a name, its echo was drowned. Flowers, ferns, great rocks, everything in its track was treated to the same reckless inconsideration. Only the mist rose higher and higher as though it would regain the height it lost when the waters made the mighty leap, and dashed its very heart to pieces on the stones below.

How she gloried in the daring of the mist. It was so light, and thin, and quiet, but in its very silence there seemed to be strength.

It was gaining slowly, but she cheered it as she saw it ascending, her eyes gleaming with excitement as she watched it. "I know you'd like to slide down the falls." A hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"I'd rather go up with the mist," she answered

Glenn Andrews, as though she was neither surprised nor pleased by his sudden arrival.

"I got through my work earlier than I expected," he began. "When they told me how far it was, I thought it would be too late for you to come home alone."

If he expected her to thank him for the consideration, he was disappointed. The wind that the falls generated had blown some of the waves of her hair across her face. She carelessly brushed it back with her hands. A strand of rebellious hair, that seemed unmanageable, she pulled out and threw away.

"Stop that." Glenn tapped her fingers lightly. "Haven't I told you not to do that? It's a crime to ill use such hair as yours."

Esther obeyed him, but could not resist the impulse to say: "You may look like Christ, but you can act like the devil."

She saw him drop his head and walk a few steps away.

"You might as well have come on with me if you were coming anyhow."

He did not look at her.

"I told you I would come, if you would wait until to-morrow. It was a poem for you I wanted to finish."

Esther went to his side, penitent; the act had lost its sharp outlines to her.

"The words that you said someone would set to music for me?"

"Yes."

"Let me see them, won't you?"

"Certainly not."

"Oh, do; I'm wild to read them." Her eyes lost their unconcern as she pleaded.

"You know I am in earnest when I say that you will not have that pleasure. What's the use teasing?"

He was drumming on a rock with his boot heel, as he leaned against a shrub. The stream that caught the waterfall laughed and lathered over its rocks as it flowed beside them. They

were of the most delicate tintings, pale lavenders, green, and pink and blue. Glenn Andrews was gazing at them.

"Did you ever see such pretty shades as the rocks of mountain regions take on? I've often wondered what caused their coloring."

With an aggrieved air, Esther allowed the drift of interest to turn at his bidding.

"I supposed rocks were alike the world over."

"That's because you only know your own beautiful ones; some day you'll see the ugly ones; then you needn't bother to wonder what made them so. Just kick them out of the way and forget them."

"Is that what you do?"

"Yes, when they are not too big for me."

"I don't like the hurt, when I stump my toe on these pretty ones. It teaches me to go around all I can. The jagged ones that I meet some day needn't think of being disturbed, if I can get around them."

"But sometimes they block the road, what then?"

"I'd get somebody to help me over."

"I hope you will have that good luck all your days, Esther."

Glenn Andrews' voice had a minor sweetness. The thought of contrasting her vagrant childhood with the world she must one day know, was singularly pathetic to him.

Stooping, he picked up a rock and cast it across the waters.

"Yes," she said; "I was always lucky, that's how grandpa came to call me 'God's child.'"

"We'd better go now; it must be a good three mile walk." Glenn Andrews took particular care to note her mood as they went along, the wild charm of her unstudied grace, the vibrating delight of life. How much happier she was than if she had had her way.

CHAPTER IX.

It was the next Saturday before Glenn went again to see Esther. Mr. Campbell entertained him on the verandah. He sat some time, expecting every minute to see Esther come bounding out. Her grandfather looked so worn when he came that Glenn felt it a sort of imposition to allow him to talk long. Although their topic was of deep interest, his shriveled features seemed to smooth out as Glenn told him how rapidly Esther had advanced that summer.

"It is remarkable," he said, "how she can take a piece and master it by herself. What she most needs is encouragement; some one to keep her interested and stimulated."

"I had hoped to let her have lessons under the

professor at the University this year. It had been my calculation a long time until she was taken sick with fever. The haggard look came back to his face. The doctor fears it will go into typhoid."

"You don't mean that Esther is sick now?"
Glenn stammered.

"She took to her bed the same evening she came back from the falls and hasn't been up since."

"I didn't know a word of it. I should have been over if I had known. I should have come at once to see if I could do anything to help either of you."

Glenn's steady mouth trembled. A tumult of memories crowded upon him. He thought of the Indian Well, where their lives first came together. Suppose she had breathed in the germs that day when she tried to protect him.

"Let me stay and help you nurse her, Mr. Campbell, "you look tired and need rest. I am so strong and I have no ties to call me away."

"You are very kind;" the rest was left unspoken, for a hand was laid on his arm. Mr. Campbell made his expression excuse his absence as he turned and followed the negro girl.

Presently when he came back Glenn got up hastily.

"Is she worse?"

"No, she wanted to know if it was not your voice that she heard."

"May I see her, if it is not asking too much?"

His face was full of sorrow as the old man bowed and led the way. "She wanted to see you."

Esther's eyes were closed; her head lay deep in the pillow, the waves of her hair flowing back from the whiteness of her face. "Esther," he whispered very softly. She opened her eyes and her lips broke in a smile. He held out both hands toward her and caught hers in their double grasp, looking down in her face.

"How are you? I didn't know until this min-

ute that you were not well. I came to take you to the one place we've never been," he told her.

"I thought maybe you had come to help me over the rock." She smiled faintly.

"Well; be very quiet; don't worry about anything; we'll do all that for you. You know you promised to play the piece you learned last week for me. Let's see, it was to be at the spring; that was as close as we dared venture to Indian Well, where we met."

"Don't give me out." Her voice was weak and low. "I expect to do that for your farewell; you must get back to college in time."

"How do you know but that I had rather be detained; don't run any risk." This seemed to please her.

"Is this better than the other life—the life among your friends?"

"This is sweeter, for I am looking forward to a lifetime with the world." She smiled and turned her head to rest it from the one position she had kept too long.

"It will be a year before the world can get you; I am glad you have decided to take another degree, although you seem to know enough already."

"I know enough to realize just how little I do know, but the special course along lines that I am going to make my lifework is all that I shall try to master yet. Everything has its turns; I'll learn it all in time, I hope."

"And then you'll be great."

"More likely dead."

"Most great people are." Her lips suddenly quivered.

"You take it slow. I couldn't bear to think of your dying."

"You are talking too much now. You and your grandpa take a rest. You both need it."

"He must be tired after five nights and days, but you are company. We can't both leave you at once."

"I'll play host now; go to sleep. I'll be with you all the time."



"Grandpa, lie down over there on the lounge."

When he had humored her she cuddled down contentedly and went to sleep.

With a ministering tenderness, Glenn kept watch over her.

Typhoid fever was full of terrors to him. He hoped that her fever was only due to the cold she had taken at the falls.

It was very penetrating. He had ached a little afterward and thought it was from being saturated with the dampness that day. Suppose the fear in her case was true. All that beautiful hair would have to be shaved off. He jealously resented this, caressing her hair as he looked at it. The doctor came later and said her condition was better and that she would be out in a few days.

Glenn drew a breath of relief. He would stay during those few days.

CHAPTER X.

SWINGING her violin case by the handle, Esther started off through the cornfield, stopping now and again to pull a spray of morning glories that wreathed around the stalks to the tips of their tassels. By the time she got in sight of the Curtis house there were many of these branches trailing over her. It was still early. The heavy dew had dampened the dust on her shoes. She tried to brush it off with the leaves she had gathered, then bunching the blossoms of bright color together she fastened them on her breast.

Just as she walked up Tagger was seated on the steps of the back porch, getting Glenn Andrews' boots in order for him. "Let me have the brush a minute." Esther took the brush, leaned

over and cleaned the mud off of her own shoes. Then she took up one of the boots and began to polish it. A thrill of delight leaped through her at the thought. She was working for him. When she put it down the boot looked fresher and glossier than it could ever look under Tagger's care. There was a sniffing sound and Esther looked behind her. Tagger stood scouring in his eyes with his shining fists, his small body quivering with sobs.

"What's the matter with you?"

"You'll git my money," he said through his gasps.

"Well, for heaven's sake! you little scamp, I don't want your nickel."

"Tain't no nickel," he blurted out. "He gimme a quarter for turnin' de cartwheel and standin' on my head. Dat warn't work; dat was play."

Esther's voice echoed through the halls. When she stopped laughing, she said: "You poor little mite, I hope he will give you the half of his

kingdom. Here, take the brush and earn your fortune."

As Tagger took up the other boot, to finish it, Esther unclasped the bunch of morning glories and tied them at the top of the one she had polished. Seeing nothing of Glenn, and passing a word with Mrs. Curtis who was busy in the dining room, she went out to the flower garden. About her in riotous health and beauty grew flowers that gave no evidence of care. There was a suggestion of wilfulness everywhere. The sun had not been up long. It was splashing its rays in the face of the great, slumbering mountains like spray on the face of a sluggard. Glenn walked up behind Esther as she bent over a white rosebush in the heyday of its blooming.

"You did not waste time waiting for me. This is worth seeing. Don't you think so?"

As her face raised to his, how pure and radiant it looked. The purity was heightened by the flush.

"Oh, if I could only do to them as I want to."

She stretched her arms and brought them together with a sigh. "I'd like to hold them close and love them as hard as I could; then I'd be satisfied."

"You'd crush them, break their stems and pay the penalty of indulgence by pricking those arms of yours by the wretched little briars hidden under the beauty that you would spoil," he said, sharply.

He wanted her to see a lesson in this.

"That's the way with life," he said, watching her break off one of the buds which she put in his coat.

"Come on. You have got enough. I must leave by two o'clock."

"I've been ready longer than you—my violin is on the porch. We can go by there to get it."

At the start Glenn saw that Esther looked very radiant, but suddenly the look of exaltation faded from her face. He did not understand her mood.

Generally she enjoyed what he recalled to her, visible or invisible, with the most exquisite feel-

ing. He dearly loved that trait in her. This was not one of her receptive moods. She did not seem to know when they got to the spring.

He indulged in an indolent sprawl upon the grass, and she dropped down on the roots of a tree by his side. He was an ideal loungeur. That was sufficient contentment for awhile. He was trying to think it out without asking her.

"What's the matter?" he said at last. "Have I hurt you—displeased you?" That passive gentleness of manner was rarely changed. "Won't you tell me?" He placed his hand softly over hers that lay on the ground. Her lashes, delicate in their tinting, beat together, struggling to catch the tears that tried to overflow. She pulled away her hand and started to rise. The child's heart was almost breaking and the rebellious tears that came, hot and fast, were dashed away by little, mad hands.

"Oh, Esther, have I hurt you? Don't, don't! I'd rather you would strike me—anything but that." He sprang to his feet and bent over her,

"Are you disappointed in me. Have you found too many flaws? Is it because I must go away?"

His soft, sad eyes regarded her uneasily. "If I am the cause, haven't I a right to know?"

"You oughtn't to have to be told," she said, with shamed frankness, when she could command her voice.

"If I had meant to, I wouldn't; that is my justification."

He touched her hair. "Come, this isn't you—I always liked that straightforward way of yours. Don't spoil our last day. Tell me, what's the matter?"

"That's what stings—you not only thought little enough of them to throw them away; you forgot it."

There was a complaining note in her voice. It was less anger than grief she felt. Her head had the plaintive droop of a spoiled child asking consolation.

"Do you mean the flowers on my boot; is that all?" Slipping one hand in his pocket and

pulling out a few, bruised, draggled morning glories. An expression of joy flashed over her wet face. A faint, amused gleam shot into his serious eyes.

"Tagger used them for a handle, and I thought their condition decided in favor of pressing rather than wearing. I saved the pieces you see."

"They were all the color of my dreams—I couldn't help but think that was the way they would go some day."

"If I can help it, they won't."

Taking out a notebook he dropped the flowers between its leaves. Her girlish illusions were dear to him. He wouldn't destroy one of them.

"Here, let me get your violin. Play for me, while I smoke."

She took it from him, and he began smoking, as she played for him the piece he had asked her to learn. He could see the confidence she had gained in herself. Patience was all that she lacked.

"There is yet another one I want you to learn for me."

"What's the use? I may never see you again. I don't know that I'll worry with it."

The thought of his going away met with resentment in her. She did not like to picture life with his companionship withdrawn.

"Fiddledee humbug! I expect to see you again lots of times. Maybe I'll spend Christmas day with the Curtises. I might come over awhile at that time if you would ask me. I am not going home just for a day. New York State is too far."

"I couldn't divide you, I want the whole day or nothing." Esther leaned her elbow on the violin case.

"I remember the first time I was ever offered a piece of a whole thing. I was a very little girl. I had a china plate that I always used at my place at table, and one day a boy broke it in halves and mended it. It had tiny green dots shaped like a fence row around it, and I noticed one place where the dots didn't fit, and then I saw

where they had pasted it together. A little chip of it was gone. It nearly broke my heart. They all said it was as good as new, but they couldn't make me see it in that way. What do you suppose I did?"

"There is no telling."

"It had been the pride of my life, but I took that plate out, and broke it in pieces and strewed them down the road to cut his feet when he came by from school."

"Suppose the feet of others had got the punishment?"

"I wasn't old enough to reason that out then."

"Some people would have been sore enough and revengeful enough not to care if they had. I have known such instances, but I can understand that your plate would never be the same to you with a part of it gone. I don't like anything incomplete myself."

"Give me the whole day—I want you all the time."

"If you will promise me to learn every piece of music that I ask you to, I will."

"You haven't told the Curtises yet that you were coming?"

"No."

"Well," her voice was merry, "that's a bargain."

Glenn Andrews looked at his watch.

"Great Scott! ten minutes to two. I must go."

They stood for a moment hand in hand. Not a sound could be heard save the water lispings in the spring. He touched her hair. "Beautiful hair!" he half whispered. "If it had been cut off, when you came so near having the fever, I should have asked you to give me a curl."

His veins throbbed with tenderness—between these two there was a tie nearer than blood—the tie of comradeship. One couldn't think of relations more subtle or pure.

"Give me your knife," she said.

Glenn raised her face, touching her chin gently with the tips of his fingers.

"No, no," he said. "It is much prettier where it is. I wouldn't let you cut one off."

She turned and closed her violin case with a snap.

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN he had gone, Esther went back to the woods. The thought of his coming with the Christmas time kept her nature alive and glowing. Her interest in music became more absorbing than ever. She practiced for hours at a stretch. This exceptional interest was a triumph that had given the old grandfather a steadier balance of mind, when during these years he had tried to fill her mother's place, nurturing, encouraging the possibilities that lay in this young soul, ennobling, inspiring a deeper meaning to life. Glenn Andrews had helped him. He appreciated that. They saw him occasionally when they went in to her lessons. Esther seemed to realize that Mr. Campbell was making a sacri-

fice for her sake and every week the professor could see the forward step she had made.

The college monthly came to her regularly now. It always had poems or stories by Glenn Andrews. All these she preserved. There was a sort of reverence in her care of them. They were a part of him—his creations. In the satisfaction derived from them, she became more impatient as to her own imperfections. The ripe, rich beauty of autumn trailed by in all its glory without the love it once had from her. Her walks became less frequent. She felt a relief when the snow first fell. Snow always suggested Christmas. She kept such close watch that the calendar was not needed to tell her when it was near. In the innocence of her heart, she pictured Glenn Andrews watching the hours go by with the same impetuous eagerness—he who had gone back to his old solitary life, as though nothing had dropped in for a moment to change it.

It was Christmas. A light snow lay over the valley.

Esther wrapped a hood close about her head and walked back and forth on the verandah. A low wind among the white boughs made a lullaby for her longing.

The nearer the realization, the more impatient she grew.

At last the sound of wheels, and the brisk stepping of horses charmed her heart—he was coming. She heard the sound of his voice as there was a halt at the gate.

“Oh, it’s you, is it, Mr. Glenn?”

“Who else did you expect?” asked Glenn Andrews, stretching out his hand cordially to greet her, enjoying the dignity she tried to assume. He had speculated as to how she would meet him.

The fire roaring up the wide chimney was sweeter than music to him. It had been a cold ride. They were so glad to see him, Glenn thought it was the next best thing to going home.

“Get up close and warm yourself.” Esther shivered at the thought of his being cold.

“Let me have your coat, Mr. Glenn.”

"No, it's too heavy; I'll lay it over here." Folding it he threw it across a divan and drew his chair up to the fire.

Esther leaned on the edge of the mantle, looking at him. The wind had blown in her hair, it lashed about her face, and with the old careless gesture she tossed it back, impatiently

"Have you been pulling that hair out again?" said Glenn, with a sort of proprietary right.

"No, but I've been cutting it off."

"You haven't!" These words held the heat of indignation.

"If you don't believe it, I'll prove it."

She stepped over to him as she drew something from her belt and pressed it in his hand.

"You know Christmas never came to you from me before." Just at that minute Mr. Campbell came in. He settled himself in his own rocking chair with a sigh of relief, as though he were hypnotized by the warmth of the room. He talked on and on, selecting topics upon which neither seemed to have an idea. Esther had

made her a lot of pillows out of some old silk dresses of quaint patterns, and as she sat amongst them, she was almost afraid to breathe lest she split them. They smelled very strongly of tobacco, having been so long packed away in its leaves.

Glenn Andrews felt something soft and slim between his fingers, but it puzzled him to know what the texture was. He was restless with curiosity.

Esther enjoyed his perplexity with quiet amusement, and was sorry when after a great while her grandfather thought out for himself that young folks enjoyed themselves better alone.

Glenn turned slyly to see him close the door after him.

It was very interesting, this expectancy; he felt something as he did when a child he had lain awake all night waiting for Santa Claus to come.

His heart would leap with impatience at every sound. The old chimney, drawing its heated breath to keep his little body warm, had added

to his irritation. It seemed to him that the wind could cut more antics then than a circus pony cavorting for his feed.

In its sound he constantly fancied he could hear the coming of that old false ideal that had been the first to fall, but it had not fallen until many a little prayer had been answered and many a young dream been realized. Such ideals leave their imprint upon the mind. The memory of the joy it gave softens and purifies the heart before it awakens.

Glenn Andrews leaned over and opened his hand to the light; it was a watch chain, made of Esther's hair.

"That slide was on a chain my mother wore," she said.

The sentiment of it made him feel that he stood at the white sanctity of her soul. with its opening and unfathomable depths.

He raised the chain to his lips and kissed it affectionately. He could not have thanked her in words. He realized that:

"Sentiment that is real is not acquired—it flows into the veins like the breath of the sea waves, completely freshening every sense with its presence."

Glenn took up his overcoat and brought out a music roll with her name mounted in silver.

"It is full and you are to learn it all. That's the agreement." He laid it open before her.

"The very hardest that you could find."

"Just what you need."

Esther hummed a bar here and there as she turned the pages. She was in an ecstasy of content. A lilting joyousness of Glenn Andrews' presence was in everything she did and said.

They lingered over the Christmas dinner. Mr. Campbell told yarns of the olden times when he was a boy on that holiday. He took his pleasure in their company at the table, and afterwards left them alone again.

They made an exceptionably cozy picture, sitting together in front of the wood fire. It was beautiful to see the snow outside, falling in tiny

siftings, displaced by the snow birds' restless stirring.

Glenn and Esther were so comfortable. How could it be winter out there. He smoked and she read him selections from his own poems—the ones she liked best. He had no idea she could read so well—it must have been her reading them that made them sound better than he had ever thought them before. There was a slow unfolding of her woman nature as he watched her. It was almost imperceptible, yet so much surer than a sudden burst.

"You'll keep on with your lessons?" he asked.

"After this year grandpa won't be able to afford it."

"But it will never do for you to stop now. I was talking with the professor the other day about your art. He is interested in it. He wants to study English; maybe he would exchange—if you could teach him. Do you think you could?"

"What! I a teacher?" She clasped her hands involuntarily. "But suppose he'd let me try?"

"I'll see if he will."

"Oh, will you, sure enough?" She was now seated closer by Glenn, listening with an absorbing interest.

"When will I know?"

"There is a lot of time between now and next September. You'll finish out this year, of course."

"Oh, yes, except when the weather is too bad for grandpa. He's getting old, you know."

Glenn could see how he was failing.

It was about dusk when the buggy drove away from the front steps. The parting was cordial and yet it seemed to lack something for both. Perhaps grandpa's being there complicated the situation. Whatever it was, in both their hearts there seemed something lacking.

CHAPTER XII.

THE coming of June brought an end to college life for Glenn Andrews. He had had a letter a few days before, deciding an important question—in fact, the question of the greatest importance to him just then. While he was waiting for Esther he read it over again:

“New York City.

“My dear Andrews—Of course I hadn’t forgotten my promise nor my interest in you. It seems a lifetime since I stood in those priestly looking robes on that old stage waiting to receive my discharge and hustle or go hungry. You were at the foot then. I remember you; a solemn-faced chap, but mightily in earnest. I am glad that you are at the head, and ready

for the fight—the thick of it. I always knew that was the kind of metal you were made of, so it does me good to be able to give you a boost. You are to be associate editor of the magazine—give up most of your freedom and take an editor's chair.

“You may come right on. I wonder what you will be like after all these years since we cavorted over that campus. Yours fraternally ,

“Richmond Briarley.”

What did Glenn care for slavery? His love for his profession would even up scores. Going among strangers had no depressing effect upon him. He was singularly fitted for that kind of thing. He believed that every soul should be alone a part of its existence, away from the sight, the touch of affection, and seek deeper self acquaintance and understanding. This was how he came to cultivate his passion to know and be something.

Now he was going to try his hand—his life was to be full of interest and effort, and all the

training he had given to his faculties were to be exercised and tested. Esther joined him presently to go for their last ramble.

"You are to lead the way anywhere. I am with you to-day," he said.

Glenn felt a subtle sadness at leaving her. This human study had been most interesting to him, nor would it be the least of his regrets for what must be given up. The others were finished, he had reached the last page.

During the stroll, Glenn told her that the professor had agreed to make the exchange he spoke of at Christmas.

"Now you are to promise me that you will keep up your art. Don't let circumstances overwhelm you."

"I couldn't keep from trying to go on, if I wanted to, but when you get away you'll forget about me."

"I don't think I shall."

He was very calm. No matter what he thought or felt, he didn't intend to drop a word

that might disquiet her mind or disturb their tranquil sense of comradeship.

"I expect you to do something some day. You'll not stay buried down here all your life. You were not born for oblivion."

"I am afraid you will be disappointed in me. But I'll do my best."

She looked down, pulling at the moss on the log.

His going so far away was her first great sorrow.

"I don't believe I would though if I didn't have next summer to look forward to; you said you would try to come back then."

With her simplicity and daring directness she added. "Take good care of yourself, Mr. Glenn, for all the world couldn't fill your place in my heart."

"You think that now, Esther. You seem to see something complete in our friendship. It is all you want. A day will come when you'll understand that it is not satisfying. The mist of

morning is on the hills, and hides the outlines of the landscape; you can see but a little way. After awhile it will gradually lift, and give you a clearer and broader view."

She shook her head.

"I know you can't see it now. The ripening of your nature will show you the good fruit, and of how little use it was to cry over ~~the~~ pretty petals when it dropped its bloom.

She looked at him, her lips parting as she slowly grasped the drift of his words.

"Patience and faith are what you must have."

"The patience I would have to borrow, or steal, for I never did have any of my own."

It was going to be the hardest lesson for her to learn.

She took the knife he was toying with, and asked suddenly:

"Put your foot up a minute."

He was wondering what she would do.

"I'm going to leave something for you to remember me by."

She began carefully to etch a sentence across the upper part of the leather.

"Bear harder, cut it—that little scratching won't last—as long as you are putting it there."

His eyes rested on her hair, that lay like a crown on her bowed head.

Slowly she cut each letter. "Don't look until I get through."

The fine, sharp blade was doing its work well; there was just one more word. She made a slip and the keen point plunged through. "Oh, did that touch you?" Suddenly withdrawing it she saw the blood leap out and run down his boot leg. Her eyes opened wide; the despair in them was enough to move him.

"Oh, Mr. Glenn, what have I done to you?"

"It's only a pin scratch; don't think of it." He tried to console and reassure her.

She began unwinding the soft mull tie she wore. "I know you'll bleed to death if we can't stop it."

He had taken his boot off. With tender,

trembling fingers she was binding the cloth to his leg, winding it around again and again, trying to wrap out the sight of the blood.

It was no use, in a second the red stain would radiate over the white surface.

"What shall I do! oh, forgive me, forgive me!"

She knelt down and pressed his knee in her arms and bent over it with tears, the incense of her love mingling with self-reproach. Her penitence was pathetic.

He regarded her grief with compassionate softness. This came near disarming his resolve. He wanted to take her in his arms as he had never done in his life. As she held the wound close, he resisted the impulse to flinch.

"I'm all right, don't you worry."

He read the line on the boot.

"I wouldn't take anything for that. It will sweeten the absence, and I hope this scratch will make a scar that I may wear all my life to remember you by."

"I'll never forgive myself for it—never!"

"Don't say that. It's a little thing after all. See, I walk all right. Let's go home." Putting one hand on her shoulder they started off, Esther watching every step he took with fear and alarm.

"Are you telling the truth. Don't it hurt you to walk?"

Turning his face away, he bit his lips.

"Not much, you know there is always a little soreness, no matter how slight the cut."

He wouldn't tell that the knee was a very dangerous place to receive a wound.

All the way the joint was stiffening and getting more painful. His face beamed in the effort to conceal his suffering. When they reached the steps he leaned his head against a column; he was wearied and felt that he could bear no more.

"Come, lie down; I'll fix the bed for you and find grandpa," she urged.

"No, come back; I'll sit here on the step awhile. I must be going soon."

Dear little heart, he would never while he lived forget her.

"How can you go, hurt as you are?"

"Sit down here by me, I have but a few minutes with you. I ordered my horse for five o'clock."

Without further resistance she took the seat. She had not forgotten that his will was the only one she ever met stronger than her own.

"Forgive me?" looking up to him, she asked.

"Don't use that word between us." He gathered her hands in his own, partly for fear she might touch his knee. Soon his horse came around.

"Poor cripple," Esther said with a caressing accent, stretching her hand toward his knee, as he mounted. Then she pressed her hands hard against her eyelids as he said good-bye. When she looked up again he was gone. She stood sighing as if her soul would leave her body, as he rode on at a gallop, outlined against the far blue of the hills.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE first shock of Glenn Andrews' absence was a bitter trial to Esther, who grieved unreasoningly. His going seemed like the end of the world. It was over, those rare, dear days of smiles and tears, of trifling quarrels and sweet reconciliations. She wondered how she had ever thought the sky was so blue, the grass so green.

Through all of her desolation, however, ran the thought that he wished nothing so much as for her to advance in her art.

Would she let the first rock block her way? Youth can forget its grief. She was so unconsciously true to him, that before she scarcely realized it, she was back at work, harder than ever.

She began teaching the kind old German musician English to pay for her instructions.

Heart, brain and soul she gave to her art, not all for its sake nor hers, but for the man that was the world's best type to her.

The devotion with which she had worshipped him was for the time transferred to the violin that became the absorbing and crowning ambition of her life.

Glenn had been gone nearly a year. The summer, instead of bringing him, brought a disappointment.

He wrote her:

"Fate or Providence has put in its oar to the exclusion of my own interesting plans. I didn't dare really hope that I should see you this summer, even while I planned the trip. Providence would never be so kind as that. I am ordered to Athens to do some special work for our magazine. They have been unearthing some more wonderful curiosities there. This is the last note

I write before going abroad, for I sail early tomorrow morning. How much easier it is to learn things than to unlearn them. I used to think differently at college. Very many times, more than I will admit to myself, I have closed my eyes and tried to imagine that I should open them upon yours, gazing disapprovingly at my 'steenth' cocktail. Many times I have been glad when I opened them that it was not so—at others I have been a little sorry. There is a deliciousness about your not being with me which is quite a new sensation. I shall never again pity the old Flagellants. I know now that there was a certain ecstasy of pleasure for them which we have taken too little account of. There is a pleasure in not writing to you, too; I am writing now because I know if I don't I shall not hear again from you, and I confess that I don't want my flaggellation to take that shape. You were growing when I left you. Have you stopped? Don't stop thinking—don't stop striving—don't stop hoping. You have no lack of imagination, inspiration, but

you need the cold, cruel leaven of fact. Your symphony needs less harp and more violin. The Jews are clinging to their old ideals. The Gentiles crucified it, and have a living gospel. Let them die if they won't live without nursing. You don't want them. (I mean the ideals—not the Jews this time—metaphors always proved too much for me.) And finally don't preach to others as I am doing to you. It's a bad habit and never does any good. But remember that there are a few misguided and dreamy creatures who think you may do something one of these days if you ever get your eyes rubbed open wide enough.”

Glenn Andrews.”

For the next year his habitual haunts would know him no more. He would combine with his trip a while in Paris. Casting aside all obligation he entered into the spirit of the life about him. Paris, with all its dangers, all its charms, the extraordinary influence of that congenial life, touched him with a glowing heat of inspiration.

He revelled in his hopes—in his dreams. Here he would write something worthy of him. His nature was rich in the vivid impressions, intense feelings and fine thoughts which make life full of real meaning and significance. Here he saw many sides of it—much of it was meaningless and distasteful, and repelled all of his finer senses, but “it is in experience that one sees all that is most vile and all that is most beautiful.” This was an excellent opportunity. All the while he was maturing—beginning to have a more tolerant knowledge of his fellow man. His heart was kindlier—the weight of his judgment lighter.

Half the world away, Esther was sorrowing for him—the memory of the disappointment he had caused touched deep fibres in her that ached and ached and ached. Besides this, she could see her old grandfather growing feebler with the setting of every sun. His small stock of vitality was slipping away.

He knew that the stalk was withered, and soon must fall, yet he tried to face the truth in smiling

silence. Sometimes—when he thought of the hands that had so longed to have control of his child—the anguish in him overflowed. They would soon have her in their grasp.

THE GIRL.



CHAPTER I.

MR. CAMPBELL did not live through the winter.

Esther was left to the care of his nephew, living in a remote part of the valley.

One morning, when she had rocked one of the children to sleep, she sat with it in her arms, gazing out on the gloomy day with sad, set eyes. For the time being she lost all memory of the scene about her. The laughter of the children, the woman leaning over the bed, cutting small garments out of coarse cloth. She began to remember all that her grandfather had meant to

her. She recalled his tenderness, the strong fortress of his great love built between the world and her. It had crumbled so slowly that she didn't comprehend that it could ever wear quite away, until it had crumbled to the ground. True he was dead, but he had made a defense for her even beyond the gulf. Though stunted in many things, he had always held to his life insurance. The farm was worn out—the house old—it would bring little, but the two together would help her to maintain her independence until she could master her art. He did not know the years or the money that it required—he only felt that through the medium of her art she might hold some of the dignity of position to which she was entitled by right of birth. Knowing this, Esther yearned with her heart and soul to go forward. His lofty, beautiful character shone out before her mind without a flaw. The thought of again taking up the task alone was sweetened and ennobled by that memory.

The woman glanced at Esther as she laid aside

one pattern, put the pins in her mouth until she could place another. She was a saffron-faced, stoop-shouldered woman—one who prided herself on the drudgery she could do, who welcomed, rather than flinched from hardships.

“What are you studyin’ about now?”

Esther shuddered as she recalled the present.

“You ain’t thinking about startin’ up that fiddlin’ again, are you?” the other stopped short to ask. A shadow crossed the girl’s face.

“Jenny told me you had got it into your head to take lessons again from that old Dutchman at the college.”

“I have been thinking about it,” Esther answered calmly.

“Goodness knows I wouldn’t! I always thought the fiddle warn’t for anybody but men and niggers.” Her high-pitched voice was piercing. “Georgy got a juice harp somewhere, and I took it away from him and burnt the fetched thing up. I have always heard: ‘Let your children learn music if you want ’em to be no

'count.' ” She stopped to get her breath. “Your cousin John thinks it’s an outrage—the idea of your taking lessons again. He knows nothing t’all about the man—but foreigners are a bad lot.”

“Did cousin John tell you that he opposed the idea?” Esther interrupted her to ask.

“He didn’t seem to take to it, any more than your trapsin’ over the woods by your lone self.”

“Did he tell you he thought that was wrong?”

“Well, not in so many words, but I can tell when a thing goes against the grain with him. He don’t like to hurt you. I tell him he thinks more of your feelings than your character. I just took it upon myself to tell you for your own good.”

The woman’s speech was harsh and to the point. She continued abruptly:

“You might do your own washin’ and ironin’ too, instead of hirin’ it all the time. You couldn’t do up a pocket-handkerchief.”

Esther got up, and laid the baby in the crib; her arms ached so.

"If you knew how to do anything you might help me with all this sewin'." She laid one knotty hand on a heap of it piled beside her.

"I don't know how, but I will hire that part of it done, which you think I should do," she said gently, looking straight at the woman.

"When cousin John wouldn't take any money for my board, I asked him to let me work for the worth of it. I didn't ask him to make it easy for me. He has a big family. I wanted to earn my way."

"He does think you try to earn it," she admitted generously, "but I think it's mighty easy for you myself. You ought to be very thankful. Look at the time you have—the whole blessed evenin'. You have nothin' but to help Jenny with the children, and the cookin' and the milkin'—what's three cows to milk? I have seen the day, before the family was so big, when I could do all the work on the place and not half try."

Esther made a brave effort to control the

strong spirit within her. From the start the other had persisted in misinterpreting her emotions, misunderstanding her ambitions. She kept guard of herself, for this was her cousin's wife.

"When do you get the mail out here?" Esther tried to change the subject.

"When do we get the mail?" she repeated with intense disgust.

"Every time we send to mill, that's four or five times a year too often, to get those papers that John will take; readin' those vile things is the ruination of the country. I keep 'em from the children the same as if they were scorpions. As for letters, we don't get many. Most people we care about live closer to us than the post office. You lookin' for any?"

"I'd like to get one."

"From that college man? I reckon he's forgot you are in existence."

"I shouldn't wonder," Esther said, with an indifferent show of pride,

"He was curious looking to me; the way he wore his hair was abominable."

"He's my friend. I'd rather not talk of him."

"That's no reason he's too good to be talked about."

"As you please." Reaching for her hat Esther started toward the door.

"You'd better let 'lone fightin' for him and learn some common sense. You'd never get married if men knew how little account you was. When I was your age I'd been married three years," she said, proudly. "If you don't want to be an old maid you'd better settle down and marry." Esther closed the door as she uttered the last word.

"Marry? What? A plowboy, a pedler, or a washing machine agent?" That would have been her cousin's wife's idea.

She wondered as she said this to herself what had become of all those people we hear of who "married and lived happily ever afterward." A sob caught in her throat, and she almost ran

until she was out of sight and sound of the woman's voice.

Esther Powel at eighteen, and in her young, fresh beauty—this was the offering she would immolate on the altar of her limitations.

CHAPTER II.

INSTEAD of resorting to the woods, her old friend, Esther made her way down to the plum thicket. The honey bees were humming to the heart of the blossoms.

Throwing herself full length upon the ground, she lay in a white drift of them. An hour or more was given to heartrending sobs of utter grief and abandonment of everything in the whole world.

The pathos of her starved, unsympathetic existence, living in isolation among people as heavy as wet clay. All the sentiment, thought, passion, of her being had no outlet—none of the cravings of her youth had been satisfied.

Between her and Glenn Andrews the silence had been unbroken for almost a year.

As she lay there looking up, with her arms folded under her head, her heart almost bursting with a sense of her own helplessness, she pictured herself accepting the knowledge that she would never see him again. All the unhealthy fancies born of loneliness and sorrow possessed her. The day was gray. The steel rim of the sky seemed to fit the woods. She watched it with a stifling sensation. It looked as if it would soon bend the trees double and close in, shutting down upon the narrow space in which she lived.

She remembered to have seen her grandfather turn an old, worn pan of granite down upon his early tomato slips. He did this to keep out the light, until they could get strength enough to stand the hardier growth—he did it to force them. The consistence of nature's laws she did not understand.

She only knew that to-day for her was very

lonely, narrow and dark, and to-morrow would be another to-day when it came.

She went back to the house with a dull expression of hopelessness in her eyes.

CHAPTER III.

So the days passed—the cold, wretched days. Esther was sewing diligently, making both sleeves for one arm, blundering on everything she undertook, until it exhausted her teacher's patience. For some time she was less a help than a hindrance—yet she was sewing.

One evening she dropped her work and went out to meet her cousin John. She often met him when he came home. This time she was unusually anxious. He had been to mill.

“Well, you are back; we've missed you,” she said.

Mixed with her love for him was a big proportion of pity. He had such a hard, stupid kind of life and had never been appreciated.

"Hello, youngster!" he greeted her, with his stout, strident voice. "What'll you give me for a letter—a two-pounder?"

"It depends on where it's from."

"Paris, France."

"No? Really?"

Holding a package just above her head, he read: "Mademoiselle Esther Powel, Etats Unis d'Amerique. He's sending back all your old letters. This looks as if it might hold a dozen or two."

"They are not mine," she cried, as, laughing, she leaped and snatched it from his hand.

"Glenn Andrews," she repeated, breathlessly, holding the writing before her eyes. Without a word she stole away, to read it alone. He loved her, this cousin of hers, this practical, unimaginative man, but he had never understood her. Her ideas were not his ideas, nor her hopes his hopes, but he was proud of her in an uncomprehending manner and he smiled at her aspirations as at his boy baby's ambition to drive the

mules. A thrill crept down to her heart. It was a book exquisitely bound, bearing Glenn Andrew's name. She fondled its pages, ran her hand lovingly over their smooth surface. The book opened to a folded paper, on which were some notes jotted down for the violin, an accompaniment to a song that he had written.

Turning the leaves, she came to a card; a line on the back of it read: "You can learn this. Let me hear at New York address after April." It was dropped by a poem, "My Little Love of Long Ago."

This girl, gifted with all the subtlety of rare natures, understood. Her face quivered with tenderness as she gazed at it. The world was full of light—somebody in it took an interest in her. This had fallen like some faint, soft fragrance in her life. Between laughter and tears she read the poem:

"My little love of long ago,
(How swiftly fly the tired years !)
She told me solemnly and low
Of all her hopes and all her fears.

She feared the dangers of the way,
The striving and the work-a-day
 That waited far across the sea—
 The loneliness of missing me.
She never doubted me—ah, no !
My little love of long ago.

“For she had faith in everything,
 (How swiftly fly the tired hours !)
A heart that could not help but sing,
 And blossomed out amid the flowers.
My loving was its best refrain,
My leaving was its saddest rain.
 She sobbed it all upon my knee—
 The loneliness of missing me.
I kissed and comforted her so—
My little love of long ago.

“My little love of long ago,
 (How swiftly fly the tired days !)
Such little feet to stumble slow
 Along the darkest of life's ways,
While time and distance and the sea,
Or my poor, careless heart, maybe,
 Could not have told from spring to
 spring,
 Why we so long went wandering !
Saddest of all is not to know !
My little love of long ago.”

Esther was radiant with joy. She sped over
the ground like a wild young deer, running to

the house for her long-forsaken violin. She carried it to the back of the orchard. She propped the music up in the low fork of an apple tree, and wrestled with the opening bars. It was written in a minor key and was the most difficult accompaniment she had ever seen. Over and over again she tried to bring out the plaintive harmony that was there. She had to give it up at last—it was beyond her reach—it challenged her. This caused her flickering ambition to flash up anew.

A new resolve glowed in her eyes. To be thwarted in a thing was touching upon an acutely sensitive nerve. She would not rest until she had beaten down every obstacle between her and her hope of attainment. She would free herself of these maddeningly narrow surroundings.

Glenn Andrews immediately answered her letter, found upon his arrival in New York. He said:

“You have lived among the flowers, had great

grief, and now the flowers do not console you. And yet, if you only knew it, nature is a thousand times better at consolation than human beings. I long ago gave up looking for consolation from people—I can get it from flowers. Maybe it is because I don't live among them. In lieu of flowers, I take work, and the grind I go through takes the edge off griefs, joys and ambitions. It reduces one to the dead level of passiveness, which is not ecstatic, but which does not hurt. So I might say to you: "If the flowers do not console you, try work"—but, doubtless, you have been working. I know that you are capable of it. Perhaps time has worn off the brunt of your sorrow and you are feeling the after pain of loneliness—which is even worse to bear, because less vivid and more constant.

"You ought to do something some day with your art. If you only know it, you are not unfortunately situated as regards your future. Try and look at it that way. Lift up your head and throw your shoulders back. Go and look in the

looking-glass and make a face at yourself, and remember you are not an editor, that your nose is not on the grind-stone and that you have, after all, something to thank God for."

Esther had been faithful to the impulse of that day. She slaved with a resolution painful to see. In that year she had changed, developed greatly. The kindly old professor regarded her with pride as he sat listening to her, after she had conquered the music Glenn Andrews had sent to her. There was a sweep of magnificence in it.

At the last of the year there came a change. The old professor was leaving for a broader field. He encouraged her to make an effort for the highest mark; her next step, in his opinion, should be New York. Of course, it would take self-sacrifice, he told her; "but what is sacrifice when one is at the center of the world?"

New York, which she had feared, and which had always seemed to her so great and so far. New York that now stood for all the hope in

her life. After the professor had gone she began turning his advice over in her mind. She could go no further here. She might there. But the struggle to keep up the pace in New York while she was doing it, would probably throttle all the ambition and freshness she had as capital to begin with. She thought of people she loved who had gone. She could not turn out ill after all their care. She might accomplish something in spite of the difficulties. Lots of people had. Her impulse was to dare until, under the heat of its spell, she wrote a line to Glenn Andrews.

“What do you think of New York for me?”

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT do I think of New York for you?" Glenn Andrews replied, "frankly I don't know. You forget that the one thing necessary to answer your question is the one thing I don't possess. That is to say, I don't know you as time has made you. What I would have said years ago to the slip of a girl, I cannot say to the growing woman. You and your art are the deciding quantities. Have you bodily strength, or only nerve fibre? Have you real genius, or only mediocrity? Genius, which lives by self-understanding, can forgive this blunt questioning. New York takes strength. It is a great monster which grips you by the throat and shakes you as a dog does a squirrel. The process shakes the

life out of its body and leaves it broken and dead, or else it twists its neck, bites strong and deep, and is allowed to go. You must draw blood to make the monster of city life quit—the rich, warm blood of enthusiasm and applause. And I doubt whether your teeth are strong enough.

“Success means hard work—long, bitter days and nights of it—drab days of monotony, black nights of disappointment. It means toil and tears. This is a maelstrom, and only the biggest branches float on the surface. The little twigs are sucked down. And it is a place of giant timber. The oak from the country hillside is only a scrub here. You must remember this. The bigness of it all makes for heartlessness. When one meets a beggar on every corner, one soon ceases to feel sorry; and where failures are so common, there is seldom a helping hand or even a sigh of sympathy. Only the warmest fire can go on burning brightly with the ice falling so thick around it.

“So much for you yourself, and your own view

of yourself. As to your ability, I mean. Your circumstances I do not know. New York takes money. In comparison with your own home, it takes a great deal. To succeed in it requires time—years; and unless you can afford to stay it through, you would better save yourself the discouragement of failure, for there is no bitterer failure than that which we feel to be purely circumstantial.

“I pass over the question of the evil of New York. Evil comes from inside of us—it is not absorbed. If we are pure, it does not touch us; it goes by. I believe it would go by you. There are no temptations in New York any more than there are at home, for those who do not want to be tempted. You are, no doubt, a far better judge of this matter than your minister—I am heterodox enough for that.

“There is another side. No one knows genius so well as itself. If you have it, New York is the place for you. The greater the body, the greater the attraction for the great centre. I would not

counsel you to disregard its force, for I believe only true motives move you. And if you know yourself and believe in yourself, you will find a way to beat down other difficulties. There are ways of living in New York cheaply. You might essay the purgatorial round of music lessons; your violin might earn its own halo—who knows?

“I take it you would come alone. There are places where young women, unattended, are made welcome and cared for; and there are places where earnest workers congregate where there are ordinary comforts at low rates—these, if you should decide to try the venture, you must let me tell you of. I should be glad indeed if what knowledge I have of the city might be of some service to you.

“In closing this letter, I feel that, after all, I have told you nothing. You have, no doubt, considered the question in all its bearings. Such a step is a serious one—far too much so for me to intrude upon it. Be true to yourself—to your

ideas, your judgment, and your reason. If you do this, you will be true to your art. Do not hesitate to write me if I can help you, but you must not ask me to advise you as to coming. 'What do I think of New York for you?' I don't know!

"Glenn Andrews."

CHAPTER V.

HERE was a man who had lost the romance of life. Not a shred of sentiment was left.

Richmond Briarley strode about his den, pulling his smoking jacket from a pair of vicious-looking antlers above the door, his slippers from the wings of Cupid poised above the glorious Psyche.

There was a princely abandon in the luxurious den he called "home." Looking about it, one would conceive him to be a man quite beyond the ordinary—if the trophies, pictures, statuary, bespoke his individuality.

"Don't wait for me, Andrews, go ahead," he called out from an alcove.

If his heart was not open to his friends, his

finest wines were, and the one is often mistaken for the other.

Richmond Briarley had ample, irregular features, hair and eyes the blackest black, and an olive gray complexion. There was something stoic in the closing of his lips, set around with circular wrinkles, revealing the traits peculiar to his type. He hadn't the least regard for the past, nor fault to find with the future.

Coming out, he poured a glass of wine and drank with Glenn Andrews.

"Have a smoke," glancing towards a tabourette, strewn with pipes, some of them disreputable enough to the eye.

"Take any of them, you won't be smoking any old, dry, dead memories—these are all 'bought' ones."

"I'll help myself. I was just reading my mail. The boy handed it to me as I was leaving the office."

Folding a sheet of paper on which was written

only a name and address, he took up one of the pipes and began filling it.

So Esther Powel was in town. It was a daring entrance upon life for this little hard-headed, soft-hearted Southerner. He looked thoughtful; the soberness of his youth, rather than the labor of his manhood, had lightly marked his face. A sudden apprehension seized him for the pure, sweet life he knew so well. It was almost as much as her life was worth to come here so pretty and so friendless. She needed protection.

This thought took possession of his mind to the exclusion of all else. In the old days he had been the only one who could bend her wayward will. Her faith in him was the blind unquestioning faith of a child. Her own feeling for him she did not reason with. She accepted it as a fact which was beyond her analysis. Under its spell she had grown and flourished against great odds. Why should she not continue to do so?

"Briarley," Glenn went on, filling his pipe, and

packing it down with his thumb. "Suppose you knew a girl who was coming here alone, to study art, what would you consider the very best way to shield her?"

"By keeping away from her."

"But, suppose she needed some one to look to—suppose she were young and knew no one. City life is a fiercely hardening process, you know."

"I'd get some woman friend to show her all there was to see, and that might cure her. So-called sin charms because it's unknown."

"Don't you think a girl's love, if not unappreciated, is a shield and an inspiration?"

Briarley shook his head.

"Oh! of course, I forgot. You don't believe in love."

"I do, as much as I believe in any other hell."

Andrews was silent.

"Have your fun out, then we'll be serious."

Their views were directly opposite, yet the en-

thusiasm of each made ground for respect, if not agreement.

"While you now admit such a phantasy, Andrews, you get the credit of living by the head. It is generally understood that you never let scruples of the heart stand in the way."

"I am not a woman; besides, it is a matter of self-denial, and not unbelief. My love is my profession—long ago I made my choice between woman and art—if I had chosen woman that love would have ruled my life. I have given over much for my work; it has demanded sacrifice. I am just now beginning to prove myself equal to its despotic sovereignty. Briarley, unless you have tried for one thing all your life, you can't conceive how bewildering and sweet a burst of it is for the first time. Under no conditions whatever would I sacrifice my best aims, my highest ambitions. It is better to be than to have. That's my philosophy."

"Go on. Every man has the right to work out his own destiny."

Briarley filled his glass again. "The way he can get the most satisfaction is the way he generally chooses."

"Satisfaction hurts the soul. There is nothing worse than satiety of the senses. I would never let myself become thoroughly satisfied."

"You couldn't ask for more than the success of that last book. The critics rendered you distinguished services," said Briarley. "I understand the sale was enormous."

"It has sold very well, but that only forces me to wrestle the harder to keep up the standard of that reputation. If I cared for a woman, my heart and soul could be loyal to her, but my time and vitality belong entirely to my art. 'Women are born to live and love. They only really live after they love.'"

Andrews went on as though the other had endorsed his doctrine. "Love is an uplifting force to genius. A man would be doing a chivalrous act to win and hold the devotion of a girl in such an instance as I have cited."

"It would be a risk."

"Yes, but in my judgment the advantage is much greater than the risk."

"It would be a responsibility."

"I like responsibility; it braces a man to bear it."

"Well, the fellow who carries out your mad project will settle for his folly."

"If he did, I'd stand by him in it."

"He couldn't stand by himself. There'd be the trouble—he'd fall."

Glenn Andrews knocked the ashes from his pipe and got up, straightening his shoulders and smoothing his hair with his hands. His mind was made up. He did not expect to fall.

Knowing himself to be his own master, he felt that to lend himself to anything that would hurt her ideal of him would be impossible.

"Where now?"

"To find somebody looking for trouble," Glenn said, with a smile.

"Don't forget the Sunday night concert, Andrews. I'm counting on you. Here are half the box tickets. Do what you please with them."

"I shall be there. Thank you."

CHAPTER VI.

GLENN ANDREWS walked down the street, which had been written on the sheet of paper in his pocket.

"No. 23." He looked up and saw that No. 23 was a hospital. There must be some mistake. No, that was plainly what it said.

He stood looking at the door in an anxious manner.

"Could she be here—ill?"

He had drawn a charming picture of her, a radiant specimen of perfect health. His pulse quickened. The curtains parted and a girl appeared at the window. Her eyes were dim, her face ghastly—the look on it was neither pain nor age—it was a look of hopelessness. The rich,

gleaming hair made a glory about her head, as the light caught its golden sheen. That was like her hair. A moment she stood there, looking down the street, then dropped the curtain. He saw her turn and go sorrowfully upstairs.

The light from the hall chandelier was very brilliant—his face cleared. A better look satisfied him it was not Esther Powel.

He pondered a minute, then started down the street again. She had evidently given him the wrong number.

At the corner he stopped a policeman. "I am looking for a boarding house on this street—No. 23, West."

"Maybe it's the next street; that same number is a boarding house. All in this block are private houses except the hospital."

Glenn thanked him and went on quickly. She'd made a mistake in the street maybe. It would soon be too late to call. He did not need to inquire again, for as he turned the corner he could see Esther Powel on the steps, looking

out upon the square ablaze with light and confusion.

"It is Mr. Glenn." With the words she sprang three steps at a time to the pavement. "How glad I am!"

And then she stopped, remembered, and held out her hands.

"How you frightened me. You had me going to the hospital to find you. That's the same number on the next street."

"Well, how do you expect me to get things right when I feel like I'm flying every way and can't get myself together to light?"

Glenn always found her startling figures amusing. "You will feel that for awhile." He hadn't taken his eyes away from her as she led the way into the parlor. "You are stunned by the novelities. You will also be quickened by them."

Esther, full-breasted, slender-limbed, rounded. The joy of life was upon her—the loveliness of full bloom.

"It's good to see you again," he said, "but why didn't you let me help you get settled?"

"It took enough of your time to write that discouraging letter."

"You know I didn't mean it for that. I would do most anything to further your art. But it is best to do only that for what we are intended. Nobody could know that as well as yourself. I believed your decision would be right, whatever it was," he told her. "Are you pleased with your advancement so far?"

"Not pleased—buoyed. I hope to do something some day." As she raised her eyes to him they expressed something of the wild, delicate, thobbing pride. "I did not come to fail."

"I believe that, from the good reports I have heard through our old friend, your professor."

"He was very nice to me; it was through him that I knew about the Frenchman who will instruct me here."

"So you've arranged all that, too."

"Oh, yes; I begin my lessons next Monday."

"Smart girl. How are you situated here; are you comfortable?"

"Comfortable!" she laughed. "I have to come downstairs to draw a good breath. They stow me away in a sort of a garret on the fourth floor. As Cousin John would say, there isn't room to 'cuss' a cat without turning sideways."

"I believe your Southern men are more given to profanity than Northerners," he said.

"Oh, but his is so whole-souled that it is only 'profanity.'"

"Oh, dear; don't think that I'm opposed to it," Glenn interrupted. "I sometimes find relief in a good, wholesome ——"

Esther held up a warning forefinger.

"Then you may do mine for me. I shall need it if I stay here long enough."

"Boarding house life is a miserable parody on home, I know. But we can stand most anything for a while if the incentive is great enough."

"All these looking-glasses keep me tangled. I seem to be going towards myself, from myself,

beside myself, but I have been fortunate a part of the time. Two young men on the train gave me addresses of nice places to board when they found that I was alone and a stranger to the city."

Instinctively Glenn frowned. "Have you got them?"

"I saved them to show you." Taking them from her purse, she handed him the cards.

"You don't want them," he said, crushing the cards in his hand.

"Did they ask permission to call?"

"One did. He wanted to come with me from the station. I didn't care to be bothered when I was thinking of seeing you. My! how I dreaded to see you, though I believe if I hadn't very soon I'd have started back South," she said in her effusive way. "I was afraid the change I'd find in you would be disappointing."

"Was it?" he asked quickly.

"Yes, because it is for the better. I didn't

want to care as I used to in the old days." She was still childish enough to be honest.

"Why, did you find me unworthy?"

"I suppose you were worthy enough, but I have learned it is not well to let one's affection wrap their tendrils too close about another; it hurts so when they are snapped."

"There is no reason for them to be snapped," he argued. "The joy of clinging should make them strong enough to wrap and unwrap, leaving its sweet effect." As he was leaving, "Trust men for little and your instinct for a good deal," he said. His visit had made him all the more determined. A profound passion can be displaced only by one greater. He had had no experience in guiding people, but he had a desperate faith in his own way of reasoning.

CHAPTER VII.

GLENN ANDREWS took Esther with him to the concert. It was a great violinist's last appearance for the season.

She was happily excited, unconsciously holding Glenn by the sleeve. The glitter and glory of this wonderful, new world was dazzling. The violinist, with his long hair and big face of rugged strength, enchained her the moment the music commenced.

With the intensity of her growing enthusiasm, she gripped Glenn's arm. He was repeatedly recalled.

"I expect one day to see you sway them like that," he whispered, as the curtain went down for the fourth time.

"Don't! it is impossible," she said, sighing. "I am just beginning to feel that my teeth are not strong enough."

"There was a time when his were not, but he wouldn't let go," Glenn said with emphasis.

Tears stood in her eyes. "Don't do that, I thought it would inspire you to see such result, fulfillment; I believe it's going to depress you."

She shook her head.

"I rejoice with him, I'm glad to see him win; but three long years before you are sure of anything—even failure—is hard to look forward to."

"Did your teacher say it would take you that long?"

"Yes, but I had thought that I would double it; take twice the lessons and practice. After all, I may fail in the end."

"Hush, you are no weakling. Of course it's work, it's drudgery; that's the bracing part of it. You've earned the place when you do get it. An effortless success is only a crueller word for fail-

ure; you must not be impatient. I used to have to remind you of that."

Glenn did not know how she would take this; he had had alluring glimpses of her deeper self, but he must understand her very thoroughly or he could not hold her, charmed.

She did not make any reply.

He was gazing at a box near them and bowed to a majestically handsome woman, splendidly gowned. He touched Richmond Briarley's arm.

"Mrs. Low and Stephen Kent. Kent is an awfully decent chap. He is lucky to be a protégé of hers. What a lot of good her indorsement has been to him. I knew him on the other side. I am writing the libretto for his new opera. You were at the club Tuesday night when he was my guest. Didn't you meet him?"

"No, but I heard him play some of his own compositions. Something was said about us both joining the club. It's too literary for me."

"I am his voucher. He sails soon and I don't

think he expects to come into the club until he returns in the winter."

Glenn turned to Esther, who was absorbed in the last number on the programme.

She spoke softly to him. Gathering up her white silk shawl, he folded it about her shoulders.

"We are going in a minute. The lady you see with white hair in this box next to us is a leader in artistic circles. I want her to know you."

The curtain fell as they arose. Linking his little finger in hers under the fringe, he led her over to the box. There was something in his manner that expressed beyond question his determination that never while he had strength should the world darken this child's soul.

CHAPTER VIII.

GLENN ANDREWS was unwearied in his visits, and held to an abiding faith in Esther's future, and stronger and stronger grew his determination to be steadfastly loyal to her. He seemed to have an exhaustless reserve fund of nerve power. Stinted in sleep, as he was, and overwhelmed by his own work, yet he made time to look after her.

With an infinite patience he was cutting a niche for himself; and above it a name.

His admirable solicitude for Esther was at strange variance with his desire to wound her, bruise her, make her think and feel.

To her he was a mystery unfathomable. The heart within her was so delicate, it easily swayed

from harmony to discord. She was so sensitive, she must needs be always responsible to the painful as well as the ecstatic emotions.

In her habit of telling him everything that happened in her life there was one thing that she had kept. The nearer it came, the more vivid grew her prescience of what awaited her. The strain of this fresh anxiety was consuming her. Would she have strength to hold out?

She was whiter, her cheeks had not quite that rose bloom she had brought with her out of the air and sunshine. Under this weight she went steadfastly on, in silence.

Glenn saw this. He had told her she was working too hard. He could see that her health was not up to the mark. When there was a cloud, or the shadow of a cloud upon her face, he saw it. She should see a doctor. He told her that repeatedly. Honest as she was, she could not bring herself to tell him that she was too poor. Already she had battled through the heat of the long summer, in need of medical assist-

ance. She was living up to her income, and found it difficult to furnish the bare necessities and pay for just half the lessons she had counted on. There was no hope of shortening the three years except by increasing her practice. This she determined to do, six hours a day instead of three.

"I believe you would stay up in that room and mold," Glenn said one day as they walked in the sun by the river. "You surely could find time for an outing once a day for an hour or two." He was puzzled to know why she had declined to walk with him of late. It did not occur to him that lack of time was her excuse.

"You have your lessons but four days in the week," he said.

"Only two now," she corrected him.

"Then you have changed your plans!"

"Yes."

"And how many hours a day do you devote to your practicing?"

"Oh, several; it depends upon my humor and strength."

"I don't think you consider the strength," he said as he looked at her. "You are tired now, why didn't you tell me? Sit here and rest a little before going back."

As they took a seat on the high edge of the river, there was something like a sob of exhaustion in her breath.

"Oh, Esther! How could you?" seeing how faint she was. Her cheek fell in one hand.

"Why didn't you tell me you were tired?"

"The air was so bracing, I kept thinking I would feel better directly. How stupid of me to give out so quickly."

His tender little cares for her comfort, in small things, had often made her ashamed and afraid she was a burden to him.

"Did the doctor give you a tonic when you saw him?"

"I haven't been to him yet."

Glenn Andrews looked away across the blue

water. His heart understood. He knew by her face that the coldest thing on earth was clamping at her heart. Presently he turned back to her.

"How good a friend do you count me?"

"The best I have in the world."

"Good enough to ask anything of me—everything?"

She sat in silence, taking her hand softly away from the support of her face.

"Will you answer me?"

"There are some things that I would ask of nobody that lives."

Glenn slightly raised his broad shoulders and lowered them with a sigh.

"I am disappointed in our friendship. It has failed."

She reflected a moment; "I don't deserve that from you."

"Nor do I deserve what you have just put upon me. It had struck him like a pang. The sweet sense of her faith—her dependence upon him—had been the very dearest emotion of his life. It

strengthened him, to feel that she might lean hard upon him. He was not willing that the pressure should be lessened.

"I don't want to pass for more than I am worth. If I have fallen short of what you expected of me, I don't blame you for putting me down on the common level with everybody."

If her sorrow had been his own he could not have felt it more deeply. "Only I am disappointed, that's all."

She was distressed to the soul; his sympathy for her had been so courageously beautiful, so exquisitely true, that she could not bear the idea of disappointing him, or allowing him to feel that she underrated his value.

"I don't know men very well, but I know you are not like the others. Nothing could be very hard to bear, because you are my friend. I welcome the days which bring you to me. You have been my fortification."

"Then prove it," the soft answer came back.

"I know that something distresses you. Tell me of it, and let me help you."

"It's nothing that you could change."

"How do you know? Let me judge that."

"No, not now, sometime I will tell you if you can soften things for me."

Her keen refinement would not let her talk to him of her poverty.

CHAPTER IX.

RICHMOND BRIARLEY had never asked any questions about Esther Powel; she was Glenn's friend, and that was all.

"I saw Miss Powel," he said, as he and Glenn sat over their lunch. "I nearly got past before I recognized her. She has changed. She has been ill?"

"No, I think not," Glenn answered. "She's been working hard, and she hasn't been used to work. I am going away on my vacation to-morrow. I've been wondering if there wasn't some nice place, just outside of town, where she might go. She needs the rest, the change." Glenn Andrews made no secret of his kindly interest. He and Richmond Briarley had long been closely intimate.

"What's the matter with my yacht? The old thing might sink if it knew there was a woman aboard, but let it sink. It would give you a chance to show your heroism."

"Would you come along?"

"Oh, no; I might not get ashore. Really I have other plans, but it is easy enough to get a crowd. There's Mrs. Low and Kent."

"Both on the other side, won't be back before winter." Andrews looked worried as he spoke.

"Damn it, I couldn't do it anyhow; I've promised to go to the Adirondacks."

Briarley glanced at him. "Another woman?"

"Several, Jack and his wife will be along." Even in the intimacy of their friendship Richmond Briarley had never asked that much before. Glenn Andrews alone knew how hard was the sense of finding himself bound through overwhelming conviction of duty.

"I was out to dinner with Jack last night. You couldn't look at him and doubt such a thing as love, yet Marie was always a little tyrant. It

made me wonder, after all, what kind of a wife made a man happiest."

"I can tell you, a dead one."

"Honestly I believe he would have gone stark mad if he hadn't won her. He worships her."

"He'd have come out without a scratch. My observation is that a man can get over not getting a girl easier than he can get over getting her."

"I believe in marriage—it's the only decent way to live, but I wouldn't care for my wife the way he does; my regard wouldn't have that self-sacrifice in it. I'd want a woman to minister to my comfort, put mustard plasters on me when I was sick."

"But the wife. What would she get in return?"

"My name, for the sake of which I would sacrifice the most precious gift that could come into a man's life—a woman whom I could have loved and by whom I could have been loved."

"A pretty theory, but, ye gods! the practice."
Briarley laid down his napkin and leaned back

from the table, staring at the other contemplatively.

"Andrews, for a man of your logic, you are confoundingly disappointing. I'd have thought you'd have very fantastic ideals of marriage—of the woman that was to make your home. You claim that your philosophy is in straight lines. There are two ways of making a straight line, horizontal and perpendicular, then they cross. You think it is infamous to marry for money, and you have tabooed your pet hobby," he said with an ironical curl of the lip. "Five years ago, before you had got your bearings, you might have humored such a whimsical freak of that individuality of yours, but now you would struggle devilishly before you would spoil your life."

"I have theories, not just to talk about, but to live by. My philosophy is extraordinarily simple. You can't have the pie and eat it too."

With a reflective survey of his friend, Briarley commenced with a kind of confidential frankness.

"If you are to make marriage a commodity,

why not be brutally practical? You are a very decent sort of a chap, and fame, for you, is on the up grade. You could marry money. A poor married man might as well be a street-car mule and be done with it. Talk about it being easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than a rich man to go to heaven, why it's easier for a whole drove of them to get through than for man to get anywhere without money."

"You are very good to care anything about it, but I have quite decided in my mind what I shall do with that problem," Glenn announced with resolute calmness. The other lit a cigar, and leaned back in comfort.

"I'll swear you provoke me, and I don't know why I should give a hang. Self-will sometimes degenerates—then it is stubbornness—but I suppose every fellow has a right to sign his own death warrant if he chooses, and failure is a death warrant."

"There are some things you know and some that you don't know."

"And a devilish lot that nobody will ever know," said Briarley, as he flicked the ashes from his cigar.

There was a tender spot in his iron heart for Glenn Andrews. He was too noble, too talented, to lose in sacrifice the possibilities of so brilliant a future.

CHAPTER X.

THEY were strolling together in the art gallery. It was the first time that Glenn had seen Esther since returning from his vacation. He stopped to admire a picture, for the second time, pointing out its beauties for her. She appreciated his interpretations, and her acute understanding grew more beautiful to him.

"I never look at such work," he said, "without wondering what it cost its creator. The gift of art is great, sacred, yet it is one long term of self-denial."

"I know that," Esther assented. She was beginning to realize its draining demands. She had brightened a trifle to-day in spite of it. A little of the old impulsive blooming beauty had

come back. The brisk walk through the park, in the keen, sweet autumn weather might have heightened that—and Glenn's return doubtless had something to do with it.

"Mrs. Low has a picture in her gallery by this same artist. She has one of the finest private galleries in the city. You shall see it, I believe, now that she's back. I promised her I'd bring you to one of her receptions. She's noted for having people who are amazingly clever, or beautiful or something of the sort. Fortunately I come under the class, 'Should auld acquaintance be forgot?' But you are to do your turn. She expects it. We will go next Tuesday to her opening night. You will see a live lord. Her daughter, who married one, brought him home with her."

"Will it make me like you any less?"

"I should hope not. Rather more, for he has brutal manners, and you would never think she held a higher place than his stenographer. But she doesn't mind that, she has a title. He draws

his allowance from her and his inspiration from elsewhere. I fancy they are rather contented."

"Contented!" Esther lifted a solemn face to him.

"It seems to me that a marriage without love would crush all that was sweetest and finest in a woman's nature. Marriage for love is the dearest gift to any soul—it is the highest ideal of God's world." She was in one of her intense moods.

"But if it be for anything else?" He encouraged her to go on.

"It's a desecration. Love is not only the holiest thing in the life of a woman, but it's life itself for the man. It makes him whatever he becomes. The righteous altar-vow is a delight and to obey is the cry of the heart if it speaks the words with the lips."

"You know we never agreed upon that subject. I consider marriage merely an incident in life."

"But the one decisive incident of it all," she returned.

They had left the gallery and were going through the park. His glance wandered often from her face to a glad contemplation of the vivid coloring of the woods.

"Mightn't a man marry for honor?" finally he asked.

"Give me an example."

"I am not trying to convert you," he said, disclaiming all responsibility.

"Tell me of a case?"

His face contracted nervously. "Let's talk about something else."

With a little impatient gesture, "Oh, give me an instance, it will keep me from imagining things." She stopped by a rustic seat with an independent lift of the head and would go no further. She felt that she deserved his confidence and trust. Upon her face were tears of pained emotion. She did not know her

real place in his life and whenever she struggled for it her suffering was intense.

There was a pause. Glenn decided to humor her. Taking a seat beside her, he began in his tone of tranquil philosophy:

"Suppose a man—young—under an infatuation, becomes engaged to a girl. When he is older, his ideas change; he gets over it, she doesn't. Although he has a sincere regard and respect for her, in his heart there is another ideal. He regrets being bound. What should he do?

"I hate the word 'bound.' Marriage is not to bind, but to privilege. Without love it would be nothing more than slavery. Every human soul revolts at that.

"But an engagement is like a gambling debt; it has no witnesses. It puts a man upon his honor.

"Might he not have the nobility to assume his vows, without the fortitude to endure them manfully? That would make each think nothing of love and little of life. I believe it is impossible for a man to be true to his wife with another

woman's image in his heart; in spite of outward appearances the emptiness is there—convention cannot crush out nature. If he took a vow like that, he'd be false to it; hypocrisy is dishonor." She suddenly fronted him.

"What would you do if you were the man?"

"Oh, don't make an example of me," he said in a hard voice. "You know me well enough to guess what I would do."

She turned her eyes to his face; her expression changed. "You would be true to what you thought was your honor."

"I hope I would fulfill any promise I should make." He had always had himself in command, yet he was sometimes conscious of a fear that Esther might have dreamed some touch of heroism in his nature, which was not there. Her ideal of him had been impressed upon her immaturity.

"I have a story about a man's honor," she said after an awkward silence, lifting a small paper volume in her hand. "The young man on my

floor asked me to take it and read it. He said it was 'simply great.' ”

“ ‘Simply great,’ was it?” Glenn said, taking the book. “Certainly he is bold and unconventional enough to presume to offer you a book when you have scarcely a speaking acquaintance with him.”

“He brought it to my door one rainy day; I took it as a kindness.” Reading the French title, Glenn’s eyes took on the glint of steel.

“Have you read it?” he asked.

“No, I thought we might begin it together today.”

“Well, we won’t,” he told her, frankly. “It is not the kind for you to read. When the young man inquires for his book you can send him to me.”

Glenn was never more savagely angry as he doubled the book and thrust it into his pocket. He would keep from her that part of the world’s evil at least.

“Have I done anything you don’t like?”

"No, but it maddens me to see anybody try to impose upon you. Don't accept any more courtesies from that class; I'll bring you all the books that you want to read."

"You are very good; I'll try to remember that," she promised. He hoped she would. His care of her was like the fond tending of a flower that has been unwittingly left in a fetid atmosphere.

CHAPTER XI.

Mrs. Low's receptions were more cordial and less formal than the usual social affairs. Glenn Andrews and Esther arrived late. The richest Oriental splendor surrounded them. There were a thousand rare souvenirs of foreign lands to please the eye. The colors in the tapestries and rugs were of that exquisitely tender hue that comes only from age. The largest rug, covered with inscriptions from Saadi, the Persian poet, seemed to have caught more of the charm and sentiment of the Orient. Glenn was calling Esther's attention to it while they waited for a chance to speak to the hostess. Red lights glowed warmly through the iron-fretted lanterns swinging low. A hidden harpist was playing

soft, sweeping strains of sound. Mrs. Low caught a glimpse of the late arrivals. She met them with hands outstretched, a radiant smile of welcome upon her face.

"Ah, Glenn, Miss Powel; charmed, I assure you. Mr. Kent has been waiting to have this young lady accompany him," she said, as that gentleman joined them.

"You came just in time, Miss Powel. Our friend, Mr. Andrews, has told me that you have been good enough to take the trouble to learn the 'Serenade' that is to be in our new opera. Mrs. Low has out-talked me and made me feel that my friends should be first to pass judgment before the critics get a chance."

Esther hesitated a moment, smiling.

"That will be charming," Glenn whispered to her, inclining his head. He smiled slightly as his eyes met hers.

His approval was what she had waited for—that was plain. The next moment she had graciously indicated her willingness by taking up her

violin that Mrs. Low had sent for before she came.

The sight of Stephen Kent at the piano and Esther beside him made the rooms silent in an instant and stilled the unseen harpist. Glenn Andrews kept close watch upon the crowd as it stood in mute attention. It was to note how she was received. He had forgotten his share in the honors. Stephen Kent sang the passionately poetic words; the exquisite commingling of the voice and violin suddenly awoke in the poet the thought of what sincerity of the soul there was in those words.

In the heat of the enthusiasm that followed the encore some one grasped Glenn Andrews' hands. "And those lines are perfectly exquisite. I am wild to hear all of your libretto."

"Oh, indeed!" he answered, staring, and that moment it was the effort of his life to know what she meant.

"Libretto?" he said to himself. "Oh, when I heard such playing I forgot I had written any-

thing," he declared, with a laugh. He was extremely shocked to discover that he had composed the words.

"Aren't you a little crazy?" the expression on her face asked, as Mrs. Low came up and led him away. She had become devotedly attached to him during their life in Paris.

"If that is a fair sample of your opera, it will be most enchanting." The hearty words carried with them something of the sincere interest she felt.

"You are very kind, Mrs. Low. Your approval is a great compliment to our poor efforts. You, of course, know its success means a better future to both of us; the financial part of it being of no slight importance."

"It's going to succeed; it has the merit and the backing. Give yourself no anxiety. Kent certainly has done his part well. It is his master effort."

Mrs. Low sank deep in the gorgeous cushions and looked across to where Esther stood be-

seiged. She was so unspoiled and direct of manner. There was something picturesquely Southern in her simple gown.

"Tell me something more about her. Is she in earnest or does she play with her art for the same reason that a kitten plays with her ball?"

"Oh, she is in dead earnest, Mrs. Low. She is overworking in her enthusiasm."

Glenn caught Esther's eye as he spoke. There was a touch of pathos in the smile.

"That will never do. You might persuade her to take it more slowly." She stopped a moment, looking up with guarded eyes. Glenn Andrews was not big print to her. The depths of his nature had to be read between the lines. In her heart she wondered if he would resent the questioning.

He studied her magnificent repose, that matched his.

"She has genius. I have become quite interested in her already," said Mrs. Low.

A shade of relief passed over Glenn's features as he heard this.

"I have known her for years. The poor child has neither parents nor friends to restrain or aid her. She has not reached that point in her art where she can earn a dollar. I have been thinking many ways of trying to help her. It must be some way by which she feels that she is earning it. I know her so well."

"It is not often that I ask such close questions, but this time it is because of my interest. What are you to her?"

Her tone did not imply idle curiosity. He clasped his hands thoughtfully.

"Honestly, I don't know how to answer you. I am her friend, brother, critic—I suppose. If I had to select one word to express my relation to her, I should say, chaperone."

"Chaperone," she repeated, with charming grace. "That is a virgin field for a man's possibilities, but since I think of it, I had a great deal

rather trust some men I know to look after a child of mine than most women."

"Coming here alone, as Miss Powel did, and with very little capital, it was hard for her to find herself face to face with the world. But she has determination. She actually steals hours from her rest. She must have relief from the strain or it will crush all the life out of her soul."

"Oh, yes; something must be done," answering his intensity with a sweet interest. "Couldn't I help you in some way?"

He reflected seriously a moment.

"I believe you could. Suppose you got her to play here four times during the month and let her believe you had rewarded her by paying her twenty-five dollars each time. I would give you my check for the hundred dollars each month."

"That will be just the thing. Later she will be able to get some good engagements at drawing room recitals."

"Would you indeed be willing to let me help

her through you, Mrs. Low?" he asked, with some confusion.

"I am only too happy to be able to add that little to so loyal a project."

"Thank you. Your co-operation means more to me than you can possibly imagine."

"Your friend has been telling me of your work, and how brave you are," Mrs. Low said, as she took Esther's hand at parting. "I shall come soon to see you. I think I can add a little sunshine to your life."

CHAPTER XII.

GLENN saw Esther a few days afterward and found her unusually cheerful. Her face had a new light, and she had good reason for it. She spoke with a bouyancy of expression that Glenn had not lately heard. She told how Mrs. Low had arranged for her to play during the entire winter at her receptions. This simplified the complex future. She reflected a little more calmly on her condition. All these months she had tried to think of some way out of it. She had thought of everything—except giving up.


She made friends. She was interested in everything. In her appreciation and confiding ways Mrs. Low found a degree of satisfaction and intense pleasure in the reflected happiness from

Esther's life. Glenn encouraged the tonic of social life for her as something needful to everybody. Under his own eye, he was willing to let her glimpse at it in all its phases; the soullessness of it, its petty intrigues and foibles. The flawlessness of her own mind would itself be a shield. Her contact with such frivolity would be like that of satin and sandpaper. With intense interest he watched her career during the season. He was her severest and most unsparing critic, although he sometimes believed that it hurt him more than her. Their lives were moving along together with unconscious accord. There was an undercurrent of deeper sympathy lying dormant. He was making her a part of his life. He would have denied it, however, had any man put this truth into words and accused him. A thousand times he had told himself, reassuringly, that he was commander still. He reasoned that her art would soon be sufficiently lofty, sufficiently complete for her to hear any decree that fate might read to her. New friends, fresh scenes, homage to

her art—all these would help to fill her life. This was a conviction born of his own philosophy. He fancied he could already perceive a more independent air; a less frequent turning to him for guidance and protection. This elusive, half-mysterious charm she had acquired, he misinterpreted. It was largely due to the different lights that had been thrown upon him.

She had been repeatedly stunned by chance-heard remarks of his betrothal. When Glenn heard that Esther's name was to figure prominently in the most brilliant recitals of the season, there was a buoyant sweetness in the frank radiance of hope, the eager expectancy and passionate faith in her ability. She had been tasting some of the fruition of her toil. Of this he was proud.

The night came. It was a fashionable throng that poured into the Metropolitan. The fascinating twirl of jewelled lorgnettes and the flashing movement of the vast array of wealth and beauty made the two wide, innocent eyes that peered out



from behind the curtain, reel—drunk with the wine of enthusiasm; this little atom who was to win or lose before this great audience of connoisseurs. Win she must. No girl could shake off the memory of so public a humiliation. The sight confused her. She trembled a little and slipped back to her dressing-room. "I feel as though the judgment day were at hand," she said. "My heart is bigger than my whole body."

"You darling, it was always that." Mrs. Low gathered her proudly in her arms, as she spoke.

"Where have you been?" Esther left a warm kiss on her throat. "Up to the very same thing you were, looking for a particular face, I know."

"I'll take another survey presently. Of course he will be here. Oh! what a dream of a gown; you look like a vision from heaven." Mrs. Low eyed her closely, fearful lest the misplacement of the slightest detail might mar the perfect whole.

"This must be the laurel crowning of your season."

Her delicate face was beaming; she felt it rather than hoped it.

"This ordeal means everything to me. I am not as frightened as I expected. Honestly, I feel as if I could make music without strings or bow. Something in the very air charges me with a wild, savage inspiration. Go, look again, now. I know he is here."

Several minutes passed and she did not return, so Esther went out to the wings while the first numbers were being rendered.

"Now, my dear!" whispered Mrs. Low, as the call came for Esther. "Do your best. Glenn is in the right of the centre aisle, half-way back with the woman in pink. I know you won't disappoint him."

These words came from the gentlest heart in the world, with no idea of their tragic significance.

Esther stepped to her place on the stage.

The bored faces of the leaders of the orchestra brightened. Every instrument was ready to re-

spond to the first notes of her obligato. Even in that surging human sea she was conscious of dumbly searching for Glenn Andrews. As she stood slightly swaying with the first few strains, she saw him—his head thrown back with a superb gesture—his features all alight from the ideal soul within—his dreamy, mystical eyes full of expectancy. He was in a state of rapturous anticipation. In the “woman in pink” she recognized as being the one with whom society had intimately coupled his name.

What a heart-thrust! She blanched at the thought of it. And of all the nights of her life, this one—her very own—was most cruel.

There was a rush of resentment through her being, stronger, for the instant, than everything. She could not resist its influence; discord followed discord until the orchestra was forced to stop.

The scene before her whirled so fast that it made her dizzy. She felt blindly across the

strings for a harmony which she had lost. Glenn Andrews was conscious of a curious tightening at the throat as he saw her pitiful struggles. His heart almost stopped. She was failing. This was maddening. He had had many disappointments in his life, but this was one he could not face. Abruptly he rose and rushed out into the aisle. The humiliation was too bitter.

There was a little ripple of excitement. Esther saw him going; but still did not realize that his seat there had only been a coincidence. She hated, she adored him. The moment seemed supreme of all the moments of her life.

A feeling of longing unutterable came over her—longing to recall him—a feeling that rose to ever fuller power until her whole being vibrated with the desire. She tightened her grasp of the instrument to steady her convulsive trembling. Glenn stopped. A new thrill was creeping through the music. Her eyes evinced a conquering fire born of internal despair. She was playing now as if inspired by some power above and be-

yond all things of earth. Through it all ran the shrill, sweet strains of her long-pent soul. Glenn stood immovable, with his eyes fixed upon her.

The sublime passion throbbing through the music was a sound that a human soul could not resist, as if the player's whole nature were speaking to him. It pleaded, commanded, until it smote each tense chord of his life—compelled completest harmony. He followed with eager looks every gesture of her bow. His lips broke into a proud smile, revealing all he felt. It ended in an echo, transcendent, sovereign, supreme. The violin fell at her feet. The very air was saturated with the incense of applause.

He awakened as though from a dream to share in it. He grew almost hysterical as the audience begged for an encore. The curtain rose. Esther, flushed with her success, almost gasped as she reappeared. There was a rain of flowers, falling from everywhere. Glenn felt his heart beat after her in an ecstasy of longing. The curtain rose again and again. He had never known the

height or depth of their natures before. He adored her—Esther, whose growth in beauty, power, glory he had watched with boyish tenderness. All that he had admired, and had not dared to hope for, were united in her. From the depths of his being there came to him the first over-mastering passion of his life—in a love that he had forbidden himself.

THE WOMAN.

CHAPTER I.

GLENN sent his congratulations with a lot of flowers. He did not trust himself to call. That was not indifference, but too much feeling. The following week he sent her a few lines:

“My dear Esther:

“It will be impossible for me to take you to the musicale, but I have arranged to have Mr. Kent call for you, and I feel sure that you will be in good hands.”

This note of mild regret made her a little cross, as it was the first time he had ever consented to have her go out alone with another man. There

seemed nothing else to do but submit, wash a tear of vexation from her face, and be ready to go when Mr. Kent called.

From Glenn Andrews' point of view this privilege was an endorsement of the man he had selected. She was his treasure and he could never entrust it to any man in whom he had not the staunchest faith. Later he learned through Stephen Kent that they had gone together and the affair had been as pleasant as usual. That was satisfactory. He would have them go again together.

Ever since the concert Glenn had tried to think only of his work. His calmness at such a crisis at first led him into the belief that it would be easy to hold himself in check. The revelation that had come to him upon that night had been the work of a strong thing but for a moment. What he was now he would remain. How little did he dream of what a sharp conflict he would have in the strife to conquer himself.

He could not stay away too long—he looked

upon it in a measure as his duty to see how the infrequent visits were affecting her.

It was not until he was taking up his hat to leave that he approached the subject of Stephen Kent as her escort to the next musicale.

"He will be very glad to have you go with him." Glenn pressed her hand in his and he saw tears in her eyes.

"Esther!" He laid aside his hat, drew her down beside him on the divan. He could not leave until he had traced those tears to their source. What does this mean, tell me?"

"Oh, don't ask me that!" She folded her hands before her as if in mute emphasis.

He was not suspicious, but this made him afraid—he felt as if something had struck him.

"Did Stephen Kent dare to hurt you. If so, it's my fault—I introduced you to him."

"Oh, Mr. Glenn, let it go, but nothing would induce me to go with him again." She felt the color go out of her face as she became conscious of his fixed gaze.

"Where has your frankness and freedom gone?" He drew her toward him and compelled her to meet his eyes.

His voice was full of power.

"You must tell me what Stephen Kent has done."

"You like him; I am afraid you will be angry, disappointed." She made no effort to free herself.

He could not draw a confession from her as he sat some minutes waiting. "Have you that little confidence in my friendship?"

"I don't want to make you feel that you have not the friendship of that man."

"Then you know that I haven't."

"I know that he told me horrid, false things of your life abroad, and tried to make me lean upon him instead of you. He tried to persuade me to do all the things and go to all the places that you had warned me of. If I had known by nothing else that would have made me know it would be wrong—wickedly wrong."

"Wolf!" He could scarcely hold his grasp for the trembling of his hands.

"I'll settle with Stephen Kent," he said, aloud.
"He must answer to me for this."

Glenn Andrews' face looked manlier than ever in its rage.

Esther's heart stood still for a moment, then beat wildly in its fear.

"Don't risk yourself for me. I'm so sorry I told you."

"Now I shall take care of myself and of him also. Don't be fretting about the outcome. This is the last time you need be annoyed with it." He stroked her hair, and there was a calming tenderness in the way he did it.

She could have borne the indignity alone if only Glenn had not brought the subject up. She had never meant to tell it to anyone.

Glenn left the house and went at once, only to find that Mr. Kent was not at home. Several days in succession he called with the same result. He wondered what impulse would lead him to

if he should meet him by chance. Delay could scarcely weaken his determination to even up this score.

When Glenn went to the regular meeting of the club a few days later, it was a little shock of surprise that the name of Stephen Kent was up for membership. With a delicate tact he avoided any part of the proceedings that was not forced upon him. When it came his turn to cast his ballot for the man of whom he could have said a week ago he was all honor, he started, trembling violently as he let fall from his hand—a black ball.

The results of the ballot came as a great surprise to every man of them except the one who had turned the course. Questioning, no doubt, went round the room and there was a ripple of comment passing among the groups after the meeting was over and the members were going out. At the foot of the stairs one man met Stephen Kent and told him the result, which he had come over to learn. The disappointment in his

face was intense as he took a few steps more, taking out his penknife to cut his cigar, and met Glenn Andrews.

"Look here, Andrews, what does this mean? They tell me I am blackballed."

"They told you the truth," he said, coolly.

"Well! that's damned strange." Kent's answer had in it the sting of humiliation.

"If I knew the man who did it, I would thrash him within an inch of his life. The sneak!"

Glenn Andrews' eyes were dilated and flashing.

"Stephen Kent, you don't have to go very far to find him. I am the man."

"You; and may I ask why?"

"Because your dishonorable conduct to Miss Powel proved to me that you are not a gentleman."

He was fearless in speech and action. His exultant manliness made the other cower.

"A man generally knows the lay of the land. She is pretty free."

"Free, my God!" Glenn Andrews' face flashed fire. "You are a liar!"

The next moment the two grappled. A crowd gathered around in wild excitement. Before they could be parted the battle had been fought. With the first lift of his hand, Stephen Kent's pen-knife had slipped across and cut the radial artery of Glenn Andrews' wrist. Regardless of the flow of blood, he had dealt the blow that laid the other at his feet.

CHAPTER II.

It was several days before Glenn felt able to resume his work. He kept away from Esther until he could give himself a chance to recover from the acute anemia from which he suffered. Finally, when he called, he found that she had left that place, and her address could not be given him.

He was worried and bitterly wounded.

This girl, wild of heart, full of all sorts of emotions, full of unreasoning impulses who had once been easy for him to understand, had gained a complexity and subtlety new to him.

Yet he could do nothing now but treat it as a recurrence of her old fits of childish petulance. If, by some unaccountable chance, there was any

finality in this step of hers, and her motive was to break off their old blameless intimacy, he would watch over her from afar. There was no malice in his heart for her. Nobody could make him believe a story, the truth of which would be unworthy of her. Yet the dim, persistent sense of dissatisfaction which he tried so hard to stifle, under a rush of work and recreation, would not vanish. Time, which he filled with the fever of his literary passion, together with keeping in touch with a few old friends, had become so strained, so intense, that in spite of the firm strength he had, the inordinate will, sheer physical weariness conquered, the tense nerves for a time relaxed.

It was in the latter part of April that Richmond Briarley happened to stop in a flower store to order a palm for some friend. At the counter stood a slender girl. There was something very unusual about her or he would not have given her a moment's thought, nor the second look.

Her hair swept back in deep waves from her

brow, under the wide, soft hat. The dark blue of her eyes seemed to gently motion as she looked at the delicate orchids the clerk held across to her.

"That's what I want."

Then she turned away as he went to wrap them for her. She felt a sudden swelling of the heart, as she faced Richmond Briarley.

"How do you do, Miss Powel," he said in acknowledgment of her recognition.

"I have quite lost track of you since our friend Andrews has been ill. You'll be glad to know his doctor now thinks he may pull through."

"Mr. Glenn ill—dangerously ill?" She was white to the lips.

The look on her face he would never forget while he lived.

"Where? Where?" she said, eagerly clasping her hands. "Let me go to him."

"He has someone—you can do nothing. She does everything."

He said very little beyond the bare statement, but his answer added to the pain of her wound.

There was nothing she could do. This was the bitterest, cruelest thought—she was not needed—she who would have died to spare him pain.

Richmond Briarley knew what it meant; his heart was touched for her.

“I’m going to see him now, if you care to send him a word.”

“Tell him how sorry I am, and would you take these flowers to him—orchids are his favorite flowers. I was going to wear them to a musicale to-night.”

“Certainly I will take them.”

“Wait just a minute.”

She took the pencil of her chatelaine and wrote her new address on the box; her fingers were trembling, so she doubted if he would recognize her signature.

She smiled a little as he lifted his hat, when he bade her good-by. Pride was a matter of principle with her.

What she suffered in the days that came after could not be told.

It was early in May before Glenn was able to be out again.

To see Esther was one of his first visits. She greeted him with a grave, solicitous face.

"I am glad you are better. I didn't even know it until you had passed the crisis."

"Whose fault was it?" That old perversity had not been subdued by suffering.

"Oh, don't; not to-day, anyhow." She put her hands up and gently turned down the collar of his coat. "Come, now; lie down on the divan. You've overdone your strength."

His fingers in her folded grasp were trembling.

"I'm not equal to my work yet," he said, as he stretched out among the pillows, closing his eyes wearily.

"I wouldn't have come if it had not been your birthday," turning his head, revealing the painful clearness of his profile.

"I remembered you had someone who loved you; to think of it always before—now there's nobody."

Sitting beside him she stroked his forehead very tenderly.

"You were always thoughtful of me."

They were silent for a time.

"Sometimes I longed for the warm, sweet touch of your hand on my head," he said at last; "it throbbed so, and ached."

"Oh, dear, why didn't you send for me?"

"You forget, I didn't know where to send."

She paled under the answer. "But you had someone you wanted more." She said this with an impulsive touch of resentment.

"She was the best one I ever had. Professional nurses are not always as solicitous or as kind."

"Professional," Esther repeated to herself, betraying no sign of the relief it gave her.

The soft wind moved the curtains and let a

flash of sunlight in. Glenn looked out; the air was full of spring.

He could not but think of the old days, the paths upon which they had strolled now lay green and solitary through field and woods.

For a man who loved to steep himself in the sunshine and open air, he but seldom indulged himself.

"Esther, get your hat; it's too fine a day to be indoors. I'll take you away, out to Van Cortlandt Park."

"Are you able to stand the trip? Don't go just for my pleasure."

"I shall enjoy it more than you will," he said. "It's what I need. Haven't I always told you how selfish I was."

Without another word she obeyed him, delighted at the prospect. Van Cortlandt was beautiful. They took a little boat and went out on the lake. So precious was the silence—the solitude—the shadow of the willows, that Glenn allowed Esther to take the oars he had taught her

to handle and stretched himself full length in the boat. The water trembled under the sweet wind that blew fresh upon him.

Esther was in one of her rapturous moods, gaizng with wide, dilated eyes upon the spring woods opening out to screen the unresponsive world—leaving them alone together. She could see it all reviving him like wine.

“Esther?” The name and touch thrilled her.

“When they told me I might not get well, I thought of you—I had something to tell you.”

“Tell me now.”

“That was if I had to die.”

“Oh. don’t speak of your death!” Her voice thrilled with a passion she herself did not understand.

“What I said as a child is still true. Life could not be sweet to me with you out of it.”

“Nonsense! With a great future flashing before you.”

“Could any fortune be sweet, or any gift it brought a woman be worth having, if the one

for whom she cared were not there to share it with her?"

"A woman's love is essentially spiritual in its nature. It does not depend so much upon sight," he said.

She had dropped the oars. They were drifting dreamily.

The sun had gone down below the horizon, leaving purple shadows on its rim. The willows sent their seductive motions across the face of the waters.

She looked at him as though to draw him nearer and enfold him in her stretched-out arms. The warm impulses of her heart were warring in their wild effort to be free. Silence was the language of youth and love to him—they needed no words.

The force and the sweetness, the purity and power of his nature as she interpreted it, was the complete realization of her beautiful dreams.

"Have you ever forgiven me for spilling your blood and leaving a scar?" Her thrillingly deli-

cate touch on his knee swept him with a swift, vigorous delight.

"Forgiven! I've blessed you. That is something from you that I shall carry with me through life. And there's another I want—a memory. You never have called me by my name."

Looking into his fine, clear face, she felt the love flowing softly like a fountain in her heart. "Glenn," she whispered his beloved name.

"Esther! dearest!" Drawing her toward him, he kissed her on her lips as he held her close in the clasp of his arms with the intensity of his commanding love. Her hat had fallen off; he caught the dank fragrance of her hair.

Something fluttered in her breast—something new and strange and strong. She did not understand that she had left girlhood behind and become a woman. All the woman in her was quickened by his kiss.

"Oh, how I love to feel your heart beating against mine."

Her words, her kiss, touched his soul to its

depths. He was startled at the depths he had stirred.

"Heart! dear heart of mine!" She was in a fit of adoring fury. Her lips met his, again and again. She loved him so humanly and yet there was only the tender throb and thrill of the sensitive nature in all its refinement. Sweet emotions shot through her breast.

"Love me, no matter what comes, Esther, love me."

He too felt some hurting power bound through his blood, and wrestle with his reserve—his equilibrium.

His low voice, his soft eyes, held her; not a tone, not a look but it caressed her.

The soft shadows, the limpid waters, the open air—with it altogether he felt a strange softening.

"You never said sweet words straight from your heart to me before."

"Why words? Instinct, nature, tells us when a thing is true. That great silent power often stands between the soul and what it loves. It is

too deep for speech. Did you ever drop a pebble into a well to sound its depth? If it is shallow, you hear it when it strikes the bottom. But if you wait and never hear a sound, you know it is very deep."

Her sweet, low laugh rippled out over the waters.

"Your laugh is like that of a child in a happy dream. I hope it will always keep that sound."

Straining her to him a moment, he then put his hands to his face to shut out the dangerous sweetness.

"Nobody but you will ever understand what my nature is, because they have never so nearly felt it."

"That's true," he said, "the only difference is that I know what is best for us and what is not."

"To make music, one must have genuine feeling for it; that is true of love. There has always been a sympathy between us, but never before so deep as now. The greater the love, you know, the stronger the sympathy. Natures so well tem-

pered, so sympathetically adapted, very seldom can endure; neither can afford to indulge in the beauty of one he loves, for he may lose his own seekings in sharing hers. Ideal love is not to be satisfied."

He said this with such an expression of grief and sentiment that no one could doubt his belief in his own philosophy.

This was life indeed. If he could only hold it forever. He wanted to—he longed to—might he not desecrate this beautiful soul, by intruding his upon it for so short a time?

A sudden chill went through him. The horror of their ideals being endangered made him draw back. He had never entirely lost sight of the delicacy and nobility of the relation. He was her friend—her protector.

Slightly moving his position, he said: "Esther, what is sweeter than comprehensive sympathy? Each knows the other's highest aims and hopes, and each tries to help the other reach and preserve those ideals. There is something

beautiful, noble in the endeavor to sustain the ideals of one we love, even though they should not always succeed."

"I believe that. The desire, the effort—shouldn't that go for something?"

"I think so, but will you always think it?"

"I hope I shall."

As they anchored alongside the bank, Glenn held out his hand to help her; her cheeks were in bloom with life, and he was going home rested, with all his senses and passions much keener and many degrees finer in their possibilities.

"We have had a day of delicious happiness, we should be thankful for that," he said. "In a whole life there are but a few days in which we really live—we only exist most of the time," lowering his voice and looking into her sweet eyes.

"To be wholly happy is to forget the world and one's obligations to it." There was almost a caress in the way Glenn took out his handkerchief and lightly brushed the drops of water from her skirt. In putting the handkerchief back he

touched the pretty trifle—a souvenir to recall her twenty-first birthday. Twirling it between his fingers he said:

“This is for you. Wear it for the sake of the man who became a boy and learned what May meant.”

CHAPTER III.

GLENN knew now that he had been mistaken. The heart he had tended drew all its life still from him. His knowledge of men and women was great. He could not deceive himself. Nature demanded a climax. He must advance or retreat. He realized that he was coming to love her too well—in a sweeter, nearer way. They were to each other now more of a necessity than an inspirational force. He must go away—it was best: for their art, for their peace of mind. It was some time before he could tell her this. He could no longer trust himself to be tender with her. He dared not risk himself; he was not equal to it. It seemed to him their companionship was never so beautiful as now when he was

about to break it. He was testing his strength and asking his own soul if it were fit for the work and the awful sacrifice. It was during a short interview that he found courage to tell her how his doctor had advised a change of scene and air. A sea voyage, with perhaps a year abroad; possibly Egypt—personally he hardly expected to get beyond the old yellow city of his youthful escapades—Paris, where the aromatic breath of absinthe had tinged the air. There would be no strain then. She knew what it meant. She knew it was not for his health alone that he was putting the sea between them.

“It may be just what you need to strengthen you. In travel I fancy you will find oceans of material for penwork and gulfs of inspiration. And in Paris, that you have learned to love, you might know real life and real joy.” The words cost her an effort, but they were bravely said.

Richmond Briarley sat in his office alone that night. He had just opened his safe and from

a package of legal documents drawn a paper which he unfolded and read, a note secured by mortgage, now past due. At the bottom it was signed by the husband and wife. "Albert Winston and Mildred Hughes Winston." His lips clamped, the circular wrinkles deepened round his mouth. When he first knew Mildred Hughes he was very young and poorer than he was young. He had gone away and left her to this man, who was well launched, expecting her to escape the hardships of the poor. In time he would forget her. He remembered how he had told her so and left her—that day was more to him than all the rest of his life. It was full of her. "Forgetfulness!" He had never learned the meaning of the word. With one swift survey of the room, he slowly tore off the woman's signature—this was the last remnant of a life that had been lived. As someone opened the door his dream faded with the sound. The next minute Glenn Andrews had come in, and was standing behind him. He rose abruptly, closed the safe

door, and hid the small paper in his hand. "Hello, Andrews." He held himself down to a semblance of calm. "I thought it was about time that you blew in. What are you doing with that grip?"

"Taking it up to pack it," he said, as he took out cigars for both.

"Indeed! Are you really off? Are you romancing?"

"Most of my romancing is set to the same notes—bank notes. It serves that purpose well enough. I sail day after to-morrow," he added, carelessly.

"So you are going to kick over the traces, eh? It's lucky not to be tied so that you couldn't break away."

"New York becomes more and more intolerable every day, and I feel that I must get out of it for awhile. I will still do some work on the magazine, of course. Wait; give me a light." Andrews took the paper that Briarley had twisted and touched it to the gas jet above his head.

It went out before it reached the cigar. With a gesture of impatience he looked around and found the matches.

They smoked on, talking together for some time, Glenn toying with the paper in his hand, carelessly rolling and unrolling it. He got a glimpse of it, and said, quickly: "Look here," passing it over. "Is this of much importance? Maybe you have burned the wrong thing."

"Oh, no! That's nothing," Briarley answered, with an indifferent gesture. "Albert Winston, the poor devil, is dead, and he died beaten. One man has no business to take a mortgage on another's home, anyhow. I may be an unresponsive brute, but I couldn't turn a woman and children into the street." His throat was dry as he turned his back and laid the scorched paper over the flames. "We might as well finish it—let the ashes settle it."

"Do you mean to say that Winston died in poverty?" Andrews asked, as he got up to leave.

"He hadn't a dollar."

"Let me see; whom did he marry?"

"Mildred Hughes," Briarley hazarded, repeating her name calmly.

"Oh, that's so; I do remember her. Half the fellows at college were daft about her. Winston's money won her, they thought."

"Where are you off to, now?" asked Briarley.

Andrew turned. "I've got the ends of a million threads to wind up before I start."

"And some to break, no doubt."

"Let me hear from you occasionally," Glenn said, as he grasped the other's hand, and felt like adding, "I have guessed your secret, Briarley. my friend. Some men are heroes simply because they didn't marry."

"I'll try to come down to see you off. But if I shouldn't make it, remember to get all you can out of life, my boy, and I wish you the best of good luck."

Andrews looked worn, overworked. Richmond Briarley had hoped that the returns from the opera would take some of the strain off of the ambitious fellow—but the unfortunate affair with Stephen Kent had ended that hope.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR two weeks Esther had been at the sea-side. She had grown pale and tired from the ceaseless round of work and social play. This life had glamour, had charm, but no contentment. Her pleasure in it was not real. She entered it with the belief that it was sweet to love, natural to trust. There was nothing in life but faith and love. She was now in the midst of people who talked with a sceptical contempt of all that she had held sacred. They laughed at her simple faith in the old-fashioned morality taught her by cherished lips.

Glenn Andrews could not leave without seeing her again. He had sent her a message. In the afternoon of the last day he went down to the

seaside where she was stopping. The expression on his face was one of unrelenting yet melancholy determination. She was not in, so he struck across the sand and strolled along the beach until he found her. In spite of the pain in her heart, her sensitive, proud face denied it. There was a smile on her pale lips.

"You're about as hard to reach as the bag of gold at the rainbow's end," Glenn said, "but I am glad to find that the other hunters have not reached here. From stories that came back to town, you don't often escape all of your admirers at once. I am fortunate to find you alone."

"They are fairy stories that every girl has a right to be a heroine of during the season."

"I ventured to ask you to be so good as to give me an hour, only because I am going away so soon, and I may not see you again."

"Your 'so' is femininely unsatisfactory. That is the speech of a woman. How soon is that?"

He pointed across the water. "You see that ship? Just about this time to-morrow, when the

Majestic sails that way, you may know I am aboard of her. I will wave you a farewell."

Esther felt a tremor run over her. She looked past him at the baffled surf, as, white with rage, it sprang against the pier, retreating with a roar, leaving a glimpse of the green sea stones beneath.

"So soon as that?" she said, her eyes opening and closing convulsively. "I must have been asleep; I didn't realize that the time was so near."

"Time is a mule; it always takes the opposite gait from that which you want it to take. This month has taken wings." He gave a swift glance at her. "And I expect the next one to crawl—that is, after the voyage. I love the water."

"As the doctor thinks the sea air so good for you, why don't you cruise along the shores of France?"

"I may," hesitatingly he answered; a sense of guilt came over him at the thought of his deception.

"How long do you expect to be gone?"

"I don't know," he said, absently; he knew this was not curiosity, but personal concern; "it may be three months, or three years."

"Which do you expect it to be?"

"I do not expect, because to do that is to rob one's self of the emotion of surprise, without which there is little pleasure in living."

"I don't believe I could be surprised any more. I know how little there is ahead. I have been arranging it all in my mind."

He looked seaward. "How's that?"

"Well, Mrs. Low goes home with her daughter." Here she touched her hands together impulsively.

"You both are going; that leaves me alone."

"If thoughts count for anything, you will never be alone."

"How am I to know that?"

"You have the word of Glenn Andrews," he said quickly; "besides you have a glorious future to look forward to. You have attained! What happiness is there like unto it? Among the

many desires of my heart, the first is of your happiness, which I believe lies through your art. I am proud for you. Let me have one comfort before we part. Promise me that you will not disappoint me in my hopes for you. Your success has come high."

"Well, your future, tell me of that and what your art has cost you."

"What I have suffered is too late to discuss. One can rate truly only as far as one has gone. I cannot see as far ahead for myself as for my friends."

"I can see for you." She spoke slowly, and with difficulty. "Not only perfect health, but laurels. I hope my little spot in your heart may not be entirely shadowed by the lustre of that hour." Her composure was returning. "I shall miss you; I want you to know that I appreciate the value of your friendship, of which I stood in need. You have helped me by your fond belief in me."

He didn't raise his head, but his hand.

"Oh, I have done so little; don't shame me. You have been taking care of me instead. You have made my life richer—deeper—brought back some of the old faith in my own ideals that was gradually being crushed out. I can understand how men can be forced to such a height that falling would seem too far and hard. I wish I could feel that I had brought half the sunlight into your life as you have into mine."

"You have brought the most that will ever be there."

"Oh, don't say that just as I am going; that kind of sun shines not only through the senses, but through the soul. It will always shine if you will only think so."

She bowed her head, the wide fringe of brown seaweed trembled under the waves that ran up on the warm-hued sand.

"And I am glad that we have had this year. With all its pain—it is ours. Think of me sometimes when I am gone, Esther. Be good—by that I mean, brave."

His voice broke.

The tense strain of the moment was ended, as he bent forward. His heart was in the kiss he left on her hair. He turned and walked quickly away without looking back.

In the darkness of her room, a young figure lay stricken with grief across her bed, mourning the vision of her ideals that seemed gone without fulfillment. In the morning when she heard the happy sound of laughing voices the hopelessness of her bereavement came over her afresh. She was alone in her sorrow and memories. She was so weak that her body felt bruised, and her arms lay like a dead weight at her side. Was her courage broken? She prayed a passionate prayer for the poor, heartless women who had kept faith with virtue, and had not been rewarded—who had scattered their broken ideals along the road that they went, that all who followed must bleed and suffer. She reached out for her violin; for a while she lay still with it in her arms. It was not sufficient. She needed some human thing for

companionship. Her soul hated its bodily enthrallment—she would fly out if it—she must. With a supreme effort she raised herself, and faced the mirror. Her wide, dim eyes looked out at her in pity. Then from her window she saw a steamer going out. It was time for the Majestic that was to take Glenn Andrews out of New York—out of her life. The two loves of her life—they must die together. Suddenly grasping the neck of her violin, she struck it against the side of the bed and shattered the exquisite thing. She fell back prostrate, and there for weeks she lay between this life and the eternal.

CHAPTER V.

GLENN ANDREWS went to France, to Moret-sur-Loing, an old cathedral town, thinly peopled, on the skirts of the forest of Fontainebleau. It was secluded and out of the way. Here he would lead a quiet life of study and work. This was his delight. A poet-soul living in the pursuit, not possession of the ideal. He had taken up his abode in a little, old inn. Away from the world and yet so near it. This was a beautiful country; the sight of it did his spirit good. He loved the hills and valleys and streams. On one side the ruins of an old Keep belting him, and on the other, the mills with long rows of deep windows, from which the workers looked out upon the sunshine

and their homes. The small mill-houses nestled low in the leaves.

One day, returning late from a long walk, Glenn passed a peasant mother, poorly clothed, seated in her doorway; her child was sitting by with its hands about its knees. She kept pointing to the path that led to the mill. She was evidently looking for some one. Soon a man came in sight. A glow lit in the sombre eyes of the mother, and a smile leaped from her haggard face to the weary man, who suddenly straightened his drooping shoulders. There was something besides pain and work in the world, and they had found it. He took the child in his arms, tossing it up and letting it fall back again—this human miniature of their love and youth. Many a day, Glenn strolled at evening to see their meeting when the father came home from the mill. It rested him. He became absorbed in his work, reading the proof of the third book that was to add something to, or take from, the name of the lyrical poet.

It was not long until he heard of Esther's illness. It gave him a stab of remorse and distressed him sorely. Had he, who had nurtured her soul so carefully, injured it more deeply than the careless world? He who had enthralled her childhood, steadfastly guided her girlhood—in whose woman's destiny he had played so fatal a part. Here the pathos and the irony were strangely interwoven. Would it have been better had she never known the broader, fuller world? Had she now been living away her life contentedly in the dark? These questions came between him and his work. As he gazed dreamily out, the leaves were swaying carelessly. A vision of the dependent, lovely girl overwhelmed him. In the wind he seemed to hear Esther's voice—all the youth and laughter gone out of it. It was not like that day when he held her face between his hands and gave her the kiss of love. He sighed for the virginal softness of her tremulous lips. The wind went wandering along the wood's green edge, like a miserable thing, offering no consola-

tion. From his meditation came like an accusing ghost the realization that there is but one true aim in life—to seek and find the soul's complement. He had sought. He had found, but he had sacrificed. The spiritual need of his soul had been set aside. For what? An agony of yearning welled up in his heart—a yearning for the sense of her sweet presence which thrilled him with a joy of pain. The best of love they had missed—the supreme surrender.

CHAPTER VI.

ESTHER's health was returning, and with it her strength. Her pride and her spirit, both, were fired, There was one thing left to her in her grief—concealment. She bound this thought to her heart, and held it close—so close. She was a soldier's daughter, and came of a stock whose fortitude in defeat had been even more splendid than their valor in war. To her the secret of love had been harshly told, but she would hear it with courage. In the swiftest current of destiny, she would show her womanly strength.

CHAPTER VII.

"You will wonder at seeing this letter from me," Glenn wrote to Esther, "for it will not be a usual one—not at all the sort of letter you have been accustomed to receiving from me. Perhaps it is that I have changed—greatly changed from that old self you knew—most of all changed from what I used to be to you. I can see you now as you looked to me that afternoon at Indian Well, when I first spoke to you. You touched me so closely then—so nearly—and you were such a child.

"All through that first year I think you could never have guessed how much the blossoming of that little wild heart of yours meant to me. I watched it from day to day, from month to

month, so closely. Maybe I watered it some, and pulled some of the weeds that might have crowded its roots. I hope so. You were a child then and I a man, yet I had been a man without a passion. I thought much in those days, and dreamed that I knew myself. Achievement was my god. I told myself that my interest in you was the interest of the philosopher—the master—and I watched your mind unfold with a curious delight. I know now, dear, that it was a far different feeling from that—one that went far deeper and meant much more to me, even when I would not admit it to myself. It is to his own heart last of all that a man admits his own error. And yet, as I look back at it now, I think that I meant to be honest with myself. When you came to the city and I saw the wondrous woman that had grown—when I saw your flower heart—still the heart of the child in all that was sweet and innocent—turning more and more towards me for its sun—it waked something new within me. I saw the problem. I felt your dependence

grow each day stronger. You leaned upon me so that I thought sometimes I could feel every throb of your heart. You were achieving. Your art was growing. Your genius was lifting. You were coming nearer and nearer to the ideal that I had imagined for you. When such a development has become the great and absorbing passion of a man's life, I cannot express to you how haunting becomes the fear of disappointment, how terrible the jealousy of circumstance that may step between him and its fulfillment. You had beautiful ideals—such as I have had—and they had grown a part of you. To lose them would have ashed the ember; it would have deadened the quick sensibilities and wounded that soul-instinct of yours in which your music lived. And when I saw these ideals dependent upon me—upon my presence—upon the sympathy of mine, which I could not have denied if I had tried—I stood by them and you. Dear, the soul of a woman is a wonderful thing. It will not bear experiment. Yours was like a sensitive

plant that cannot bear the light, and sheds its loveliest perfume in the dark. So I tried to give it the darkness—to cloud the glare of hollowness that was in our world—to let the light in slowly and only when the leaves were strong enough to bear it. All this time I could not help but see that when I went from you the shock would be great. My philosophy taught me the penalty of emotion, and I thought I had much to do in the world. I dreamed of work that would absorb me utterly—that would take the best that was in me, of feeling and of effort. All my life I had denied myself the passion that my eyes told me was growing in you. I had grown to consider myself apart from others—a mental solitary who had locked the door of his heart because he had work to do. It had not occurred to me that the Juggernaut whose rumbling wheels I would not hear might crush you. It was the concert at the Metropolitan that opened my eyes. I knew then that your art and your heart had twined together so intimately that if one were cut, the other would

bleed. I knew then that I must either go or stay, that if I became a stronger part of you my going would be fatal to your own achievement and to mine. Dear, it was not all selfishness—this resolve of mine. You will never know what it meant to me to tear up the roots that had grown in spite of me: it was like tearing the flesh and leaving it quivering. But that I could have borne if it left you better able to go on. I did not know then what I know now. I blame myself that I did not read truer. The news of your breakdown and the giving up of your music came to me like a blow in the dark. In showing me yours, it has shown me my own heart. The depths of my self-condemnation have taught me myself. It has taught me that achievement is a pitiful thing compared with a woman's love—that your happiness means more to me—a thousand times more—than success: that I love you—I love you—utterly and wholly—and that I want you to be my wife. The future is impossible to me without you. Each day since I saw

you, your step has been in every sound. Each night your face has been my vision. Here from my window I can see a little knoll on which is a cross, where the peasants go to pray to the patron saint of the village. It is ugly, and battered, and old, but it has come to be beautiful to me, for I know now what they are praying for. The hills are gold with the grain, and a little winding path runs down toward my eyrie. I can almost imagine you coming down it now to meet me, with your dear face raised to my window——”

As Glenn finished the page, the boy tapped at the little door with the daily mail, and he reached out an indifferent hand to take it. A familiar flourish caught his eye, and, recognizing Richmond Briarley’s penmanship, he opened a bulky envelope. A card, closely written, and a small book met his gaze.

CHAPTER VIII.

“My young Idealist, I send you a clever story, one which shows remarkable talent, and which you really must read. There is, or was, once upon a time in this town, another consummate young Idealist like yourself, but of the female persuasion; a protégé of yours who fiddled. She, I remember, believed in a few things; among others, that there was a little to be considered besides art, and that she had a lump somewhere which she called a heart. You have always been troubled with the same feature, I believe.

“The lady has just issued a story, which I send you to-day. Just take a look at it and find me that lump, will you? Cold as an icicle! By the way, I understand that the lady in question

was quite a social success here in our city, and very much sought after in drawing rooms, in which she earned about her own price. She has come to the philosophical conclusion that you used to uphold: which is, that as long as a person *does*, it don't much matter what a person *feels*. Anyway, she is doing it; and I take it from this novel that she is not feeling much either.

"Yours, Briarley."

Glenn read the letter with a curious shock, and opened the novellette. As he finished the last page and laid it down on the table beside him—this story with the heart of a stone—he sat looking out the window with a daze of anguish in his eyes. His hands were supporting his bearded chin. Without, the splendid sunset, the gilding flame of which caused his features to shine resplendently. His sad, wistful face, convulsed with emotion. What a tumult of silent, unspeakable memories; what feelings of regret and longing! Instinct does not always point the truth.

No suspicion of the brave ruse of Esther came to him now—no apprehension of the hurt pride whose strain of revolt forced from her this literary lie. He had been driven blindly on by his yearning for the more perfect art. He didn't care for laurels now, nor for that art for whose sake he had destroyed the best thing in his life. Was ever heart-break more cruel? He sat for an hour in silence. The sunset had lost its beauty. The grain on the hills had lost its gold. He took the letter he had been writing to Esther, tore it up, and flung the fragments of what, if he had known, was the best of his life, out the window. A lazy breeze caught them up and scattered them. A single one with the word "love" on it was blown back and settled slowly in his hat. A bell was ringing for compline. He saw the peasants in their simple devotion going slowly to worship. He took his hat and walked across the street to the little café. There two comrades called him over to have a bottle of wine with them.

"Ah, poet!" one said, laughing as he reached

over and took the stray bit of paper that lay on his hair. "Still the philosopher! Making love with your head?"

"You're wrong, this time, it was from the heart," and Glenn Andrews forced the shadow of a smile into his lips.

THE END.



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